Chapter III

The Railway that was Imagined: Pre-Independence and Partition Railway Novels

Introduction

In this chapter, I take into consideration a few railway novels from the Indian subcontinent, of different temporal and spatial settings. They are some early novels based on social issues of nineteenth century South Indian society, considered as the pioneers in the field of novel writing in Malayalam, and a few novels based on partition, and post-independence India from the northern and eastern regions of the sub-continent. *Indulekha* by O. Chandu Menon, *Saraswathivijayam* by P. Kunhambu, *Train to Pakistan* by Kushwant Singh, *Train to India* by Maloy Krishna Dhar and *Ice-Candy-Man* by Bapsi Sidhwa are novels set in the vastness of the subcontinent and the diversities it contains which one can perhaps gather from the social, spatial, and temporal aspects dealt with in these novels.

In the early part of the nineteenth century, in areas what is now called India, over thousands of miles, wheeled carriages were unknown and merchandise could only be carried inland for the most part on buffaloes, camels, and pack bullocks at enormous costs (Sanyal 1). This condition as N. Sanyal points out was due to lack of good roads while the villages were scattered and self-contained and the rulers and dynasties were engaged in military and other activities and ignored works of public benefit (1). A railway system was constructed in such a background, by the British, mainly to boost the economy, by the speedy transportation of raw materials for companies in Britain and distribution of their finished products in India as

mentioned in Dalhousie's Minutes.[1] Whatever were the interests and intentions, the railways got established, grew and just as its embedded rails on the soil, the system got embedded in the land, influenced its people and transformed them to some extent. Through the reading of the selected novels, some of the customs and practices of the people during the time and space of the initial days of the railways are analysed, and the role of the railways in influencing and altering some such perceptions are brought out in this chapter. Events like partition of the subcontinent which is shared both by trains with active participation in the events, and novels by representing its told and untold miseries, both in a way fictional, are considered along with travel modes and social customs in this chapter.

Joseph W. Childers points out that after industrialization and steam engines the Victorians were not only living differently, they were thinking differently, talking and writing differently, acting differently and thereby they were existing differently (77). This perhaps is true with everyone who happened to be there when the railways was introduced for the first time.

Those who had an encounter with this technology like those who travelled by the first train in India in 1853, perhaps knew they were witnessing history being made, and most probably found their life changed. At least some of the people started feeling, thinking, living and writing differently and this resulted in railway novels. Childers, further explains that the novel and industrialism seemed to have looked to each other for models of effecting, controlling and understanding change (78). This mutual effecting, controlling and understanding relationship between the railways and literature is largely manifested in the genre of Railway literature. Agnes Repplier in the section titled 'English Railway Fiction' in

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[1]Dalhousie. 'Minute by Lord Dalhousie to the Court of Directors'. 1853. *Railway Construction in India: Select Documents*. Edit. Bhubanes Misra. New Delhi: Indian Council of Historical Research, 1999.

her *Points of View* (1893), lists the requirements for English travelling as: sandwiches, oranges, and penny novelettes, and for third class travelling she says penny novelettes are imperative (209). The working class that began to travel by train for work consumed plenty of such cheap reprints available in the station libraries and book stalls. While I would not go into the quality of this sort of railway fiction, which Repplier has given in detail, I am interested in the way the novels and the railways stay interconnected in different capacities as I have mentioned in the introduction. As it is known technology of the train that had come from England and the modern novels like English novels, seem to have got established in the subcontinent in the nineteenth century.

Indulekha and *Saraswativijayam*: Tales of Two Trajectories in Different Spaces

Indulekha (1889)[2] by O. Chandu Menon and *Saraswathivijayam* (1892) by P. Kunhambu are two early novels based on social issues of the nineteenth century in the Malabar region of the present day Kerala. These novels are considered to be two of the pioneering novels in the Indian subcontinent. Both the novels depict a period of transition from traditional society that existed perhaps for a very long time, in a certain manner of social order, to a society with modern aspirations of liberty and equality. Both the novels take up social causes that prevailed in the land at that time, but of different nature. I find as the characters traverse across different paths and encounter changes and transformation, the novels too seem to have undertaken a symbolic trajectory through varieties of spaces and times like the space and time of Brahmanism, the caste system, modernism, etc.

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[2]O. Chandu Menon. *Indulekha.* Kottayam: Sahitya Pravarthaka Co-operative Society, 1890. (Translation by. J. W. F. Dumergue. Calicut: Matrubhumi Press, 1890 is available. But the translation used in this chapter is mine unless specified otherwise.)

As the caste system prevailed aggressively during the time, Brahmins occupied the most superior position in the social hierarchy, presiding over matters of religion and caste. Rich Brahmin lords well versed or otherwise in the Vedas controlling the social order is common in both the texts. The Brahmin lords thought of themselves, as well as made others believe, that they were born into greatness, purity and knowledge. They wielded absolute power over the lower caste people who were like their slaves supposed to be born to serve them. Thus these self-proclaimed holiest representatives of God on earth made the lower caste people believe that it is their fate that god created them to serve the Brahmins. This superiority that needed to be demolished by the enlightenment generated through modern education and technology is a major theme of the novels. People were instructed and most of them believed the interpretations of the Brahmins without any questions as E. Thurston uncritically describes a Brahmin:

> His person is holy; his directions command; his movements are a procession; his meals nectar; he is the holiest of human beings, the representative of God on earth. (160)

Perhaps in many places of the subcontinent the *Manusmruti*[3] sanctified this hierarchy and the Brahmins possessed knowledge of it, with which they justified their superiority and actions of injustice. Kuberan in the novel quotes extensively from the scripture, justifying all his actions in *Saraswathivijayam* (23).

The younger generation in the novels exposed to modern education and technology is caught between the old customs and traditions and a modern progressive vision. The society that seemed to remain static for many long years is just getting introduced to the modern wonders of industries and of travel technology—the train. Many people have not experienced this magnificent means of travel yet, and most looked at it with a doubtful eye. The cultural

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[3] Manu is the mythical figure believed to have given *Dharma Sastra* (ethical codes and caste duties) also called 'Manusmruti' to the people of India.

conflicts in these novels are threefold; a colonizer's culture, the culture of the local upper class 'Hindus' and the untouchables, that appear not to belong to any of these cultural spaces. Chandu Menon's novel is based on a Nair household with its peculiar customs always connected with Brahmanism, and their social problems, whereas Kunhambu deals with the lower caste *Pulayas* and upper caste Brahmins.

Indulekha, is considered to be the first significant Malayalam novel, and O. Chandu Menon is one of the pioneers who brought the Malayalam novel to reality. Chandu Menon, an upper caste intelligent and educated person, fond of reading English novels first tried his hand at translating them into his mother tongue for his friends adding his explanations and descriptions. Dissatisfied with the translations, he set to write a story of his own in the manner of English novels for his contemporaries and thus *Indulekha* was born. Chandu Menon represents various aspects of colonial South India, highlighting the customs of the Brahmin and Nair communities of the time in *Indulekha*. The Nair community had unusual customs of marital or cohabitation practices, with the mother occupying a prominent place in the family space. There were supposed to be matrilineal traditions in place which was seen in inheritance of property that was transferred from mother to daughter, and women are supposed to have enjoyed freedom of choice in matrimonial decisions, whereas other communities followed patriarchal traditions.

Just as two different traditions existed, spatio-temporal elements in the novel seem contradictory as two worlds co-exist spatially and temporally in the novel, representing a pre-industrial and pre-railway age, and a post railway age. This is manifested mainly in three different ways as seen in the text, first in differences in understanding modern technology and education, second in different clothing styles and customs, and third in the mode of travel and the places spanning the whole trajectory.

137

Differences in Understanding of Modern Technology and Education

Modern technology and education had already reached the land but most of its subjects were either ignorant or unaware of it. The onslaught of change, though easily assimilated by the younger generation, as technology influenced the way they thought, felt and lived; was difficult for the traditional older generation not to resist, because they were predisposed to relate everything to the existent and known dogma. They tried to read everything into the familiar. Keshavan Nambudiri is a person not directly involved with any modern technology. His skepticism about technology, at least makes him think and talk about it, though he does not understand it. He is not able to shed his traditional thinking and appreciate modern technology though he has faith in its monetary benefits. A typical example is the interpretation he presents to Lakshmi about the 'smoke releasing machines in the textile mills' that were built in England and he is confident that the trains too work similarly:

> The cleverness of these white men is truly astounding. Lakshmi, you will be amazed if you see it. What a wonder! The spinning mill which we hear so much about is actually an iron wheel. This wheel makes all the yarn. And what turns this wheel? Smoke, pure smoke! But this smoke does not hurt our eyes like in our kitchens. The factory has a long tail raised upwards, like the flagpole in a temple. They say it is for the smoke to pass, but I have my doubts. There must be some trick inside, which these clever white men will not reveal. (Menon 56)[4]

A machine ensemble functioning automatically with generated power, travelling at high speed or producing goods are far beyond his understanding. He has accepted the fact that the factory spins thread and the trains move fast, but he is unable to absorb the fact that the machine does the work. For him smoke is associated with *homam* (ritual) and *homam* is conducted to please some deity, who is believed to fulfill the desires of the devotee. Keshavan believes in a comfortable known space, where he translates the smoke into his recognized beliefs and notions, but in a ridiculously inappropriate manner.

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[4]Page 56 in the Malayalam edition.

Smoke facilitating anything more than the appeasement of a deity is beyond his understanding as he says:

> Smoke is a very powerful substance. Does the smoke of the rituals *(homam)* not have power? I suspect that this is also a *homam* for some deity. Perhaps some idols or *chakras* are kept inside the flagpole. Who knows? Perhaps the deity likes this *homam* very much and the factory turns because of its blessing. Who knows? (57)

Udaya Kumar calls it a 'farcical floundering of traditional subjects in front of incongruous objects and incompatible modern spaces' (161). Whatever his beliefs are the fact that he has invested in the industry shows that his life has been changed.

Keshavan is critical of the British people, their religion, their industry and technology. He does not understand the working of a train except for another *homam* and smoke where the deity, when pleased, pulls people and commodities. He considers that English education teaches the youth to discard their culture, respect for parents and brahminical traditions while the English people hide the tricks of their industries from the natives (57). Suri Nambudhiri, if at all could comprehend a train; his perception would not have been different from that of Keshavan. Suri would oppose it and criticize it as he opposed English education for girls. He would never dream of travelling in a crowded third class compartment, and pollute himself to damnation. Keshavan and Suri represent the generation which resist technology during its early days due to ignorance and attachment to the conservative notions of culture and religious practices, though Keshavan seems to be transforming faster than Suri. Madhavan and Indulaka are educated, and understand the nuances of technology and the way the railways work. Madhavan is a frequent user of the railways for his travels to and from his village to the city for higher education and work. Indulekha has no reservations about the technology and is ready to come out and travel at any time (40).

Clothing style of a person perhaps is so closely associated with the personality, that it becomes an identity of the person, caste, region or profession. In the text some people seem

to dress according to their mode of travel. Suri tries to make a statement by surrounding himself in gold and a display of materialistic possessions during his travel. His clothing aimed at creating a good impression on Indulekha comprises gold and golden coloured clothes and this gives him the look of a golden idol. I think he believed in displaying his wealth as much as possible to let people know his worth and hides his ignorance, vanity, etc. by covering himself with gold, and expects to make an impact upon the onlookers.

Clothes of the two main male characters in the novel seem to have come from poles apart; though they are contemporaneously juxtaposed. It is not so much in their age that they differ as in their education and states of mind. These two characters contradict each other in everything that matters. Suri Nambudiri represents an older generation and feudal system, though older by just twenty years than Madhavan. Madhavan on the other hand represents colonial modernity in his life, travel and work. His clothing comprises simple, modern western clothes and perhaps gold and golden clothes are not found on his person. Suri's habit of carrying rich collection of objects while travelling is absent in Madhavan's case.

The space in which Suri Nambudiri lives and moves is dominated by the material excesses and I find that his desire to excel in display of his possessions invests heavily in his attire but contributes to present him as a comic figure. His desire to win Indulekha, whose beauty, knowledge and manners are well known, inspires him to create a lasting impression of his arrival with a display of the traditional sign of wealth that is gold. And his was the pre-industrial, pre-railway manner in which rich people travelled. The narrator is short of words to express the effect of the golden glow when Suri stepped out from the palanquin into the mid-day sun, because around him in a one-meter circle—the radiance of the sun turned yellow, acquiring a golden glow from Nambudiri. This pre-industrial, pre-railway feudalist

image of richness and power helps to impress some of the older generations in the household with the glitter of gold on his body as the author describes him:

> An idol in gold jumped out, yes, a golden idol. Head covered in a gold cap, body covered in a gold shirt and gold-coloured dhoti, gold-gilded slippers on the feet, gold rings on all ten fingers, on top of all a golden shawl over the shirt and a gold-cased mirror in the hand to look at himself often. Gold, gold, everything gold. (Menon 78)

In contrast, Madhavan is dressed in simple western clothes that make it easy for him to travel regularly and his possessions while travelling are very few (151). Gold on Indulekha's person is nominal so as to be symbolic, that displays a modern educated and cultured simplicity in taste, dressing and ornaments (15).

Mode of travel and the places along the trajectory of the major characters in the novel are also different just as their clothes are different. Suri Nambudiri travels in his feudal style, in a known space, with a number of servants on foot, carrying the palanquin with him resting inside. Servants accompany him to carry him and his possessions, to attend on him, and also to walk in front and make certain noises to ward off any person of a lower caste, so that the *thamburan* (Brahman lord) should not see them and pollute himself. He takes along with him a lot of people to carry him, as well as his possessions, wherever he went in a procession. His procession includes:

> Eight people for palanquin and six people for the carriage. The order for those who are carrying as well as those who walk together as relievers is to hum altogether. Fourteen people hum in one voice while two to four people make noise like he-hu-ho-ho-hu-hu. This sound is the royal sign of the Nambudiri. (Menon 79)

Such was the travel style of the conservative upper caste rich people before the arrival of the technology of train and they continued with it as long as possible to avoid adjustments and changes.

I think Suri needs to undergo a complete cultural change in order to travel by train, beginning with some curtailment in his feudal clothing, which is suitable only to sit in a palanquin, and

he will have to discard the collection of material wealth that accompanies him, as well as the number of servants that accompany him everywhere if he has to travel by train. Suri also needs to get familiarized with the proximity of people of different castes, along with changes in his clothing style. Though Suri does not seem to change in the novel, his counterpart, Kuberan in *Saraswativijayam* changes himself into modern garbs when he has no other choice but to travel by train (Kunhambu 67). Madhavan travels to the modern city space of Madras regularly by train. He also travels into unknown spaces of Calcutta and Bombay, and comes back home by train. Indulekha is not shown travelling in the text though she is not averse to it, and in the end she too travels by train to Madras.

These cultural differences and practices in the same geographical locality and the same society I think are due to the receptive or hostile attitude towards change and modernity. Some Brahmins like the Nambudiris resisted transformation and everything connected with technology and modernity, and thus held on to their traditions and privileges they enjoyed in society. It was hard for them to give up, change, accept and learn new things. Eventually they suffered, losing their power, wealth and position. Tamil Brahmins seem to have adopted the change faster and many of them got into higher posts in the railways. The family of Hari, the protagonist in the novel *The Strike*,[5] is an example for this. Slightly lower castes in Kerala, like Nair, Menon, etc. were faster in learning and supple to changes, hence could improve their lot with the tide of time with ease. One example from the text to highlight this view is that Suri who is not interested in modern technology still invests in land and depends on rent from the tenants. Keshavan who is with the Nair clan invests in modern industrial production of yarn for textiles and expects a better return in time (57).

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[5]Mahadevan, Anand. *The Strike.* New Delhi: Penguin. 2009.

Chandu Menon displays space in its rational and familiar form as the space in a *tharavad*, the matriarchal house hold, with a *karanavar*, the older brother of the matriarch, as head. The space within the *tharavad* in the text seems to be a small world of its own, with separate living quarters for each family, huge bathing ponds, temples, community kitchens and number of servants all moving at the will of the *karanavar*. Beyond the familiarity of the *tharavad*, confusion of the unknown rules as Madhavan experiences during his travels. His travels to unfamiliar spaces bring him in contact with situations in which he is alternately loved, cared for, duped, and cheated. The journey as a motif is common in most early Malayalam writings, and it is employed here by the author to heal Madhavan's broken heart and sooth his ailing sprits. 'The journey through unfamiliar spaces leads the hero back home where truth and resolution were rediscovered' (Kumar 173).

Madhavan travels through the unfamiliar space of the modern colonial cities of Bombay and Calcutta by the modern technology of travel. While travelling by train, he is sensationally robbed by a thug who befriends him and wins his confidence. In colonial India, train passengers experienced great danger from criminals and it is documented: 'From its earliest days, the railways served as an essential catalyst in the growth, both in scope and sophistication, of organized crime in India as well as in the development of modern, professional law enforcement'(Campion 122). Madhavan, a modern traveler had to undergo the pangs of fear and distress, side effects of modernity and modern technology of travel (Schivelbuch 78). Railway carriages and stations are often used as places of encounter both by acquaintances as well as strangers in narratives. Many a friendship and relationship get struck up during such encounters, and also certain disasters.[6] Madhavan had struck a cordial

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[6]George P. Landow. 'Railways and Victorian Culture—An Introduction'.
<http://www.victorianweb.org/technology/railways/rrlit1.html> retrieved in July 2013.

friendship with the strange young man, before he was robbed by him. Suri Nambudiri on the other hand travels only in a known and safe territory, adhering to tradition and retaining his retinue keeping himself away from modern technology and thought. But this in turn narrows his experience of the world at large.

Trains were often considered as symbols of progress and modernity (Aguiar 84). Menon who opposes the changes proposed by modern society to revamp the Nair community, strangely does not reject this technology. He discusses in detail the negative experience of the protagonist during his rail journey perhaps to bring in the evils of trains as many people in India in the early stages have opposed the introduction of the railways as a 'hazardous and dangerous venture' (Sahni 7) and Mahatma Gandhi called it 'evil' and thought that the railways accentuate the evil nature of man (42).

Menon approves many contributions of the colonizers like their education, their science, technology, and industries. Though he supported English education, he wrote his books in a modern form of Malayalam which people used in their conversation, so that more people could read and cultivate a new literary taste and use their leisure time in reading (4). He also determinedly engages in nationalism, opposing the colonial efforts to reform and change the prevailing customs of religion and caste practices. He stresses on change and continuity as opposing factors in the social structure of Kerala. He declares that to allow any state intervention in the area of Nair life would be an attack against their caste practices and customs and indeed, has the effect of changing their nationality and their individuality as *Marumakkathayam*[7] Hindus (Memorandum Appendix-1).

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[7]*Marumakkattayam* is the system of inheritance from mother to daughter and mother had a prominent place in the matrilineal system.

The practice of the Brahmin household that permitted only the eldest son to marry, forced the rest of the men to keep certain customary relationships, *sambandham*,[8] with women of a little lower castes especially from the Nair community. The Nair community in Kerala followed a matrilineal (*marumakkattayam*) family tradition and practiced *sambandham* (if one would like to consider them as temporary contract marriages), a system in which women had greater freedom to choose and discard men.

There arose a question as to whether such marriages were legal and Nair women were sometimes criticised of enjoying excess freedom and practicing polyandry. Hence efforts were on at the level of legislation to reform marriage customs, inheritance of property rules and to dissolve the Nair *tharavad*.[9] Chandu Menon vociferously objected to the efforts of the marriage commission to change and reform the marriage practices of the Nair community. It was his ideas that he seems to voice through Indulekha in her discussions with Madhavan who expresses his views like some of the educated middle class men, who questioned the moral standards of women that they thought needed to be reformed.

G. Arunima, Chandu Menon's biographer, feels that though many things about the West was considered beneficial by Menon, 'in certain respects, especially in those that impinged on what one might consider a part of the 'private' sphere namely, with regard to matrilineal kinship and its norms, or Hindu religious practices, he was not willing to either accept the superiority of the Western system or indeed accept that there was any necessity for change within his indigenous Malayalee one.'[10]

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[8] The adult female members of Nair families were married in *sambandham* but their husbands did not reside with them.

[9] Malabar Marriage Act and Madras Marumakkathayam Act, (1896- 1933).

[10] G. Arunima. 'Glimpses from a Writer's World: O. Chandu Menon, His Contemporaries, and Their Times.' *Studies in History* 2004 20: 189. DOI: 10.1177/025764300402000202.
<http://sih.sagepub.com/content/20/2/189>

He wrote in his letter to the committee, of which he himself was a member:

> The violent changes in the Bill, naturally had the effect of making the orthodox Malayalees (and they are the large majority) had the measure as one designed for abolishing caste and Marumakkathaym system of succession, on the pretext of legalising marriages. (Apendix-1, Malabar Marriage Commission Act, 1891)

Female space in many of its manifestations is represented in the novel. Nair women had a prominent space in the society and the freedom they enjoyed was even much greater than their European counterparts. They would not subject themselves to criticism of their system of marriage and freedom in matrimonial choices. Indulekha values her freedom in all matters of life as the strength and freedom she derived from education enables her to free herself from the advances of the Nambudiri. Kalyani her cousin failed to achieve the same, as she had no education. Ironically, Nambudiri blames education for Indulekha's wilfulness in refusing him.

Indulekha is empowered in different aspects as she is stationed in a privileged position in her family as well as in her society. She is a favoured child in the family and she is endowed with beauty, knowledge and manners. Firstly, it is the fact that she is a Nair woman who derives strength from her traditions. Secondly, she has had western education and is more enlightened than most of the male characters in the novel. Hence she has the courage to stand firm on her convictions and rights. Her education and knowledge is such that her stepfather taunts her to be a train driver. And given a chance, Chandu Menon perhaps is sure that his Indulekha can easily slip into that position, as he clarifies in his letter to his translator W. Dumergue, why he wrote Indulekha and one reason he cites is to illustrate to his Malayalee brethren the position, power and influence that Nair women, who are noted for their natural intelligence and beauty, would attain in society, if they are given a good English education (xvi). Indulekha defends Nair women insisting on the fact that they are educated and enjoyed freedom in the matters of matrimony that according to her would not contribute to moral

degeneration. She cites many examples to explain how this freedom is important which is not available anywhere else in the world. Her knowledge, awareness and acceptance of the modern technology perhaps helped her to transform—a change and transformation which was inevitable.

Women's life was transformed by the technology sooner or later whether it was upper caste Brahmin women, lower castes or Nair women. English education is just one aspect of the colonial modernity that was open to the natives. The upper caste women those days were constrained inside the household space. They could never venture out without escorts, could not converse with others or have any contact outside their homes. Nair women on the other hand enjoyed freedom and were less inhibited about progressive ideas. Indulekha speaks out in defence of women of her caste and lashes out at other customs:

> It is foolish to think that we Nair women are prostitutes just because we are unlike the uneducated Brahmin women who do not talk to people, and live like animals. Think of the women in Europe, America, etc. In those countries men and women are equal in education, knowledge and freedom. Are all those women prostitutes? In this place if a beautiful woman is well educated, all those who enjoy a conversation with her are considered as her secret liaisons. Is it true? If a woman can sing well and if ten men go to listen to her, other foolish men will say that they are all her secret lovers. (31)

Indulekha herself has friendly relationship with Cherussery, an intelligent Brahmin, and many people listen to her voice as she is a good singer. While Keshavan questions the new technology and Suri condemns educating women, Madhvan questions old customs in society that need to be changed. Life of the Nair women is transformed as well as the space of the Nair *tharavad*. In the end Indulekha and Madhavan commit themselves to a proper legal marriage, unlike the usual *sambandham*, and they settle in Madras, perhaps the beginning of a nuclear Nair family, breaking away from the traditional joint family space of the *tharavad*. I would like to think that it was because of the railways, and the trains that Menon could take such matters to such conclusions. Thus the social and cultural changes that the trains brought in were not to be ignored.

Madhavan's travel across the land made him wiser with experience and Indulekha was ready to move out of the protected space of the traditional *tharavad* through a proper marriage and a journey to Madras which was made possible by a train. Thus a stressful and difficult social transition from the age old customs and traditions induced by colonial influence and accelerated by new technologies and education, towards modernity, is portrayed through simple narrative techniques, in ordinary native language, and presented to the common people through the modern literary form of the novel by O. Chandu Menon.

Saraswathivijayam

Saraswathivijayam is written by a 'lower caste' author with a Brahmin as the protagonist. This novel reveals the spatial demarcation of major social issues like the caste system, social inequality, power structure, and hierarchy. As the characters travel through spaces of freedom and knowledge, travel itself becomes a metaphor of redemption. It is the coming to terms with the colonial modernity by both the ends (upper and lower castes) of traditional hierarchy. P. Kunhambu through his novel *Saraswativijayam* displays the social evils of untouchability and slavery in India and suggests ways of emancipation for the people of lower castes through a straightforward narrative.

Brahmins, the custodians of gods and scriptures owned the temples as well with the slaves attached to it. They kept the offerings and also could sell or destroy a temple at their will. Kuberan has a verse of Manu ready to justify even slavery as a traditional right of the Brahmins.

It is clearly expressed in the novel, during the interview between the Collector and the Brahmin, about the administration of temples in Malabar that slavery existed in Kerala even after its abolition.

> Ans…certain low castes are *adima* and are bound to pay *adimappanam*. They can be either mortgaged or sold.
> Question: What? Slaves? And they are sold!
> Ans: Yes. Certainly. This is a traditional right from the time of our kings.
> (The Collector understood from the Nambudiri's unflappable manner and confident reply that he had no knowledge of the act abolishing slavery. (33)

The novel begins with an arrogant Brahmin landlord Kuberan who causes "death" of his slave Marathan for the crime of unwittingly singing a song that happens to reach his ears. Marathan reincarnates in the end as a compassionate Christian and an educated judge called Jesudasan who has the responsibility to carry out the judgment for the Brahmin's misdeed. The author brings out the points he wants to highlight that the lower caste people can get emancipation, through conversion, education and technology.

Kuberan and people like him lived in the space and time of *Manusmriti*, with the archaic laws they interpreted how and when it suited them. The space of knowledge was supposed to be the prerogative of the Brahmins and denied to the people of lower birth as they believed it to be decreed by divine scripture. Kuberan tells Marathan's mother, 'You are not supposed to learn how to read and write. If you educate yourself, not only you, but the entire country will be stricken with poverty' (10). In colonial modernity people had an option of education irrespective of their castes. Unquestioning faith and subordination of the people who had not experienced the opportunities of the modern technological space obeyed the Brahmins out of fear and superstitions as Marathan's mother and an official (*adhikari*) in the text who went out of his way to protect the Brahmin.

The unquestioned importance of the Brahmanical space of knowledge, power and privileges, attained only by birth, seemed to lead them to traverse somewhat in a backward direction

149

avoiding everything progressive, clinging to the traditions that only suited them well. It is evident from the manner in which Kuberan instructs the *adhikari*, (a legal officer) how to conduct his duties in enforcement of law as 'Protecting a Brahmin's life is a more virtuous act than saving one's own'. He further explains, 'If you lose your job with the government, you just lose some profit. If you don't protect a Brahmin you are damned both in this life and next' (20). Occupying the space of so called knowledge, thus, they directed the life of the lower castes on earth as well as after death. These perhaps are the reason why N. Sudhakar Rao constructs his argument:

> In a village situation, the hegemonies of caste ideology as moral obligations and interdependency even in the absence of patron-client relationships are considered significant obstacles to mass movements. (205)

The illiterate and poor believed the upper caste people without any questions and such unquestioning servitude, perhaps, was one reason for their exploitation for years.

Kunhambu feels that the Brahmins thus believed in the lies that they fashioned and perpetuated for their convenience and immersed themselves into the darkness of ignorance: Over time they have begun to assume the status of divine decrees and have enveloped the minds of themselves in darkness reducing them to ignorance (23). They lived in a dark space of their religious knowledge which was ignorance. The *Adhikari*, Kothu Nambiar, lower in caste, for example agrees with Kuberan about the nonsensical Penal Code and he consoles himself thinking as the narrator comments, 'It was not a major sin to go against the Criminal Procedure Code,' 'as he would be committing greater sin if he went against the strictures of the most holy *smriti*' (22). This was the condition of the poor and superstitious people who existed before the technological advancements and industries in the subcontinent. A single technology like the printing press or the railways could change the situation and transform the lives of the people as it is evident in the cases of all the characters in the novel. Kunhambu was of the opinion that Brahmins too needed liberation from their kind of ignorance, like the

150

'lower caste' people who held the belief of being born into servitude due to the wrong deeds of another past birth.

Saraswativijayam is a story of the trajectories of Marathan and Kuberan through two different spaces, mentally and physically—one escaping from power, hierarchy, and tradition, and the other from law—escaping from their former selves positioned in their respective social ladder. Kunhambu celebrates education as the redemptive space for the untouchables and other lower caste people as evident from his own life as well as the life of the *pulayan* Marathan and Subhadra, the ex-communicated daughter of Kuberan. Progress through education—a promise of upward mobility through knowledge in the social hierarchy as well as conversion to Christianity, an exit door from Hinduism—another promise of mobility towards the space of a colonial modernity, are two solutions though not easy, the way out for Kunhambu. It is not only the liberation of the *Pulayan* that he aims at but a larger inclusive humanity including the Brahmin, Kuberan, who has to attain his freedom from the excesses of power and privileges. Since the objectives and situations differ, their trajectories too have to be different.

Dilip Menon considers that 'travel is about the discovery of one's true identity and of the full realization of individual possibility' (Afterword 108). Travel is an essential motif in railway novels as the protagonists go through the process of discovering the true self as they find themselves in larger perspectives of different spaces and regions. Marathan, Kuberan and Subhadra travel to unknown spaces. Spatial aspects of the course of travel by Marathan and Kuberan present two different forms of territorial and national imagination in the novel. Marathan's secular travels take him through the colonial town of Kozhikode and his progress takes place in a 'secular geography of colonial modernity of which Madras forms the centre' (Kumar 173). His route of travel is metaphorical through the imagined territory of 'colonial

enterprise of education and the law' (D. Menon 112) and the means of his travel is the metaphor of progress, the railways.

'The journey of Kuberan Nambudiri follows a sacred geography centered around Kashi' (112), as it is a pilgrimage they undertake, that would bring them salvation as suggested by Kuppan, his attendant. Kuberan's travel on foot for many days leaves him completely exhausted. Their travel to Travancore, by foot after many days reached Pattambi. From Pattambi railway station they took a train and reached Cheruvannur in a day, but Travancore after a six or seven day walk. They reached Madras through Tirunelveli, Rameswaram and Srinagaram due to fear of being caught. From Madras they went to Bombay by train and from there to the holy space of Kashi where they lived for many years hidden from law. At every destination they stayed for a few days and after receiving some hints about the movements of the police would leave that place to avoid capture. Thus the trains come to their rescue during times of crisis and rebuild their lives providing them with experience and a wider view of the world.

Hours of walking through forests and unfriendly terrains, sleeping on the veranda of a shop at night, and eating his meals in the *choultries* (places were Brahmins were fed) were all new experiences for the Brahmin. As the narrator declares: 'Travelling is an education in itself,' (Kunhambu 66) the Brahmin undergoes a process of educating himself of the hardships of the less privileged human beings with whom he refused to empathize earlier. Comparatively shorter distances that the Brahmin walked are detailed in terms of exhaustion and dangers they anticipated. The author elaborates his exhaustion, his fear and the hardships of his days of walking.

 The Brahmin was aware of the faster means of travel technology but would avoid it for different reasons. They were also aware of the railway station space as not conducive for

152

fugitives with its public nature that they suspected that policemen would be at every station if they find that the Brahmin was running away from the place (74). They would avoid crowds to escape recognition as well as pollution from encounter with lower castes, a fear which they held on to during the initial days of their travel. Hardships and exhaustion perhaps educated the Brahmin to abandon such cautions and embrace the faster train travel. But long distance travels by trains are not narrated in detail at all by the author/narrator, perhaps because they were faster and much more comfortable than walking in the jungles. In short through expressions like 'took train and reached that day in Cheruvannur', 'finally reached Madras', 'left for Bombay the very next day'(74), etc. the narrator has condensed the longer journeys. I think it is symbolic of the brevity of the journey, though longer in terms of distances, but hassle free in the space of technology.

Planning of a Brahmin's travel before encountering the rail travel seems to be complicated with temporal and spatial concerns. It is interesting to observe Kuberan when he is placed in different spaces and different situations. For a short journey during his feudal days his preparations are elaborate. Stars are consulted first to fix the auspiciousness of time to begin the journey. 25th day of the month of *Medam* (the ninth moth of Malayalam calendar) at two in the morning was reckoned to be the auspicious time to begin the journey (27). This temporal arrangement itself is a combination of the traditional that is regional, and the modern; as *Medam* is a month in the Malayalam calendar and two in the morning perhaps 2 A.M., a measure of modern time reckoning which is the *muhurtam* (the traditional auspicious time). The temporal specification of auspicious beginning of the journey is strictly followed by the Brahmin. Heavy rain and pitch darkness, would not postpone the journey, but it commenced as planned from home till the gatehouse to resume in the morning. A washer man, palanquin bearers, two cooks, one man with writing equipment, and one man to carry the materials he needed for his bath, were to accompany him. A person with such elaborate

planning of temporal and spatial specifications for a short journey realizes the fact that saving oneself is more important than anything else, takes off within a short notice, without any of his entourage to accompany him on a completely unplanned journey. Sufferings, hardships and experiments with modern technology empowered him perhaps to discard his caste practices and notion of purity to take alternative of travel by train.

All the travelers in *Saraswathivijayam* experienced a renewal of life and cultural transition from the space they left behind. They had either experienced expulsion, or fear of banishment from the space that was familiar. Sometime during their travel and stay in different sites of the country, they got acceptance and happiness. Travel assumes a major role after the supposed death of Marathan. While alive, he had no space in the Hindu social set up. Hence he had to die in that space and reincarnate in a new space of modernity. 'Marathan, through his conversion, enters the space of colonial modernity marked by the rule of law and the possibility of individual social mobility' (Afterword 112) as tradition does not offer him any consolation. Dying his symbolic death in his caste and society and escaping from the village he walked to Kozhikode, a hard journey hiding from people and suffering from hunger and thirst. His first regeneration was through conversion, shedding away the stigma attached to his birth into a casteless individual. The next station (after successfully completing his English medium school education) of his secular journey and travel to freedom was the colonial city of Madras where he reached in all probability by train and achieved his higher education worthy to be appointed as a judge.

For Kuberan travel provided self-realization, and a lesson on how to utilize his knowledge to uplift his fellow beings rather than exploit them. He too underwent a symbolic death as he discarded his tradition and went to Kashi. His resurrection and regeneration is within the space of his caste that is Kashi (103). A new awareness of the futility of the customs he

followed with fervour enabled him to develop a sort of sensitivity towards the sufferings of the poor and the underprivileged.

For Marathan as well as Subhadra travel offered a new space, the spectacle of a new encounter, and the thrill of the unknown. Subhadra too died in the space of her caste and religion, as she was excommunicated, and addressed as a *sadhanam*, a 'thing', neither a woman, nor a human being. In the brahminical space of Hinduism she has no identity other than a thing or an inanimate object. She too has to get a new identity and a human status in a modern space of education, religion and technology. She loses her space and time in a Brahmin household once she is thrown away from the village. She is in a casteless and space less stage, a non-existence, a non being, a dead person, a thing, when she opts for travel alone which was not possible in her past life. Subhadra travels to Cannanore casteless and homeless, in search of her identity. Neither an insider nor an outsider of any social order she finds it easy to adopt a new religion, a new education and a new profession to be a renewed being in a modern space.

Had these people been used to travel earlier too, and had they continued to follow the same means of travel, the transformation and enlightenment that took place would not have been possible as Kuberan and Subhadra would have travelled in a palanquin and Marathan as invisible, and away from humanity. They begin to travel by train and I think it is their travel by train that has changed everything. I find thus from the texts, travel at times is used for self-realizations and to experience new spaces, and at other times as disguise to avoid society and escape law; but whatever be the cause the means I find, brings in the effect and the means is the railway. As Dilip Menon in the afterword of *Saraswathivijayam* considers, 'travel appears almost as a subaltern impulse, fulfilling a psychic need for a space of anonymity free of restrictions' (109). All the three major players in the novel travel for anonymity to unknown

155

spaces with varied intentions and aspirations. Marathan travels to escape the Brahmin's wrath, Subhadra, travels in shame away from recognition, and Kuberan to escape the reach of law; the only way out they all could find.

There are various encounters between tradition and modernity at different levels. Travel style and mode differ according to the situations of the traveller. Kuberan in his days of traditional feudal glory travelled with a retinue of servants, and people to walk 'ahead and bring up rear shouts. This was to prevent his body from being polluted by the proximity of lower castes as also announce his greatness' (3). As the time changed, norms and laws caught the Brahmin unaware and he walks through unkind landscapes. One aspect of modernity, displacement of self, is thus experienced by the spatially and temporally displaced subject. He walks for days through unfriendly terrains and later even resorts to travel by trains, though 'learned Brahmins do not travel often, like ordinary people do, to cities or other places where crowds of people gather,' (76) to protect themselves against pollution by contact with people of low caste origin.

Trains in India during those days meant third class compartments for Indians, rich or poor, Brahmin, *Sudra,* or *Cheruma* (lower castes) without any distinction. The author does not stress on this technologically orchestrated homogenous national space, in his zest to emphasize the importance of English education and conversion to Christianity as the only means of redemption for the lower castes. But I gather that Kuberan most probably got rid of his conviction that any 'contact by a lower caste person may pollute him' from a crowded train with all kinds of people. He may have also realized that the ritualistic bath is just a means of personal hygiene, either on a railway platform or a waiting room in the station. Without the discomforts of a long journey on foot, through the jungles, Kuberan would never have travelled in a train. Otherwise if Kuberan chose to travel by a train, Marathan could not

have dreamt of entering one if the old practices were to continue. Kuberan had earlier quoted scripture about the name of a Sudra as, 'The name of a servant should breed disgust and should be connected with service,' (25) and that he should have no proper name. He signifies them as mere inanimate objects denying them a proper name. But at some point of time during his journey Nambudiri transformed himself into a modern rational being, discarding the oppressive traditions and entering into a larger humanity as it was the vision and mission of the author. The narrator sums up the effects of Kuberan's travel in the end:

> As a result of his travels and the various difficulties that he had suffered, the Nambudiri who had been previously of the opinion that even to call a Sudra by a proper name was not correct, now began to see that such beliefs were sinful. (89)

From the existence of being a Brahman obsessed with his body its surrounding space and its comforts; he seems to have begun to acknowledge the presence of other fellow beings. Most probably it was the railway journey that transformed Kuberan as he was forced to share the space with people of different castes, for he had no control over this secular colonial space.

Kuberan and Marathan at some point of time, alternately, are in a position to punish each other in the text. Kuberan's power is his traditional exploitative privilege which was unquestioned, before his transformative journeys. Marathan's power is earned legally through modern education and hard work. The crimes and mode of punishment also differ. According to Foucault 'the punishment must proceed from the crime; the law must appear to be a necessity of things, and power must act while concealing itself beneath the gentle force of nature' (106). Kuberan's punishment is a display of power and disproportionate to the crime, neither reformatory nor exemplary. Punishment by the judge Jesudasan (Marathan) is compassionate with gentle force, a Foucaultian representation of punishment with justice for all concerned. The judge represents the modern idea of egalitarian society as propagated by modern education and technology like the railways.

One of the messages that Kunhambu insists on spreading is that modern education is the greatest wealth and means of deliverance for human beings condemned to slavery and disgrace. But I think that this deliverance may be possible only with the help of technology and mobility. First of all the condemned need to come out of the space of condemnation and reach free spaces of enlightenment through modern technology of travel and get in contact with other technologies of education and communication. For Subhadra and Marathan education offers mobility towards the forward strata in life. Nambudiri's daughter, Subhadra who was an *anderjanam* (a Brahmin woman who is supposed to be inside the household) emerges into the open space to become a teacher. Her mobility and progress materialize from her education and conversion after dislocation. Marathan from a nonentity who should not be seen and should not be heard is elevated to an authoritative pedestal where he has the power to decide the fate of Kuberan.

Just as the spatial perceptions are changed, language of spatial expressions also underwent transformation. Physical space or distances were measured and expressed in the novel by the Brahmin clan and articulated in temporal terms in the beginning. The *Pulayan* episode occurs when Kuberan's procession was 'half a *nazhika* away from the *illam*' (a Brahmin household), and they had left Subhadra's matrimonial *illam* 'four *nazhikas* before day break' (3). The time of their departure as well as the distance from the household to the place of incident—both are expressed in one term '*nazhika*' which was commonly a temporal expression. For a society that travelled on foot or in palanquins the spatial experience is limited as it is in the case of Kuberan in his early life, until all the characters enter into a modern space through travel. There is a clear shift from an ancient spatio-temporal existence to a modern space and time for all the individual subjects in the novel as ideally desired by the author.

It is a Brahmanical social space that the novels *Indulekha* and *Saraswathivijayam* represent as the *avarnas* are forced to leave the public space of even the roads if a Brahmin happened to enter the road. Otherwise the holy one would get polluted even by the sight of the person. This custom was deep rooted in society and was followed strictly as the higher caste Hindus could not permit the lower castes to approach them without resulting in pollution. According to custom, a polluted person had to take a bath for purification. Those who ignored this tradition were degraded from their rank and not readmitted to their caste.

The higher castes were therefore careful to keep away from the lower castes. 'Over the centuries the rigours and rigidities of the caste system became etched more and more deeply in the social life of Kerala manifesting in the triple evils of 'untouchability, unapproachability and unseeability', perpetuated towards the lower castes'(George 34). The spatial embodiment thus spread out into a defined matrix in which the supposedly pure body of the Brahmin occupied the largest share. The other *savarnas* moved around him occupying lesser space and mainly protecting his space. The *avarnas* seemed to have no spatial bodies for they had no social space. They were not to touch, not to approach and not even to be seen by the Brahmins, and to a certain extent, by the next level of the hierarchy, the Nairs. The third class railway compartment was perhaps the only exception where there was no caste hierarchy, because people of any caste could board a train compartment (third class for the natives) on payment of the ticket price fixed by the railways.

In *Indulekha* the Brahmin presents a comic twist with his fondness for show of his material wealth and display of ignorance in his efforts to impress Indulekha. In *Saraswathyvijayam* the scriptures are twisted according to his convenience to exploit the people supposedly born into the lower castes. Women's space in three different sections of the society within a tiny spatial set up is highly differentiated. Brahmin women (*andarjanam*) were a protected lot confined

to the interior space, whereas the lower caste women's body seemed more like public property over which she had no authority even to cover the upper portion, her breasts. Subhadra too when she was excommunicated was made to surrender her umbrella and her breast cloth (57). A 'thing' according to the custodians of tradition conceivably, was in no need of cover and protection. The only exception was the Nair women who enjoyed freedom amidst such a social set up.

Chandu Menon does not stir the issues of the lower castes but dwells more upon the distance between the perceptions of individuals at the threshold of a transformation that is slowly setting in and in the social settings of a traditional Nair *tharavad.* Kunhambu deals with the burning issues of untouchability, brahmanical superiority and its excesses upon the *pulayas*, one of the lowest of untouchable castes. Menon uses the narrative space for entertainment and along with that raises certain social issues. Kunhambu presents a real life situation and seems as though he expects those who read his work to go out and clean society of social evils to convert it into a modern space of justice and equality (Afterword 95).

Travel in both the novels seems to provide some insights into the imagining of the nation. The characters live, move, dream and imagine in various parts within the subcontinent, some through the traditional pilgrimage route of Hindu temples and Brahmin spaces and others, through the unfamiliar and secular modern spaces. They experience their symbolic death and resurrection at some points with enlightenment, knowledge, awareness of the national space or deeper insights into religions as they encounter and experience all these through the fast travel experience and approach through trains. If not for the railways they would not be able to travel so far in such a short duration of time and many times over. As these two railway novels deal exclusively with the nineteenth century Southern societies of the subcontinent, in the next section a few railway novels of entirely different time and space are discussed. Time,

160

perhaps, is a continuation of unlike events and space which are extensions towards the north, the east and the west of the subcontinent with differing spatial aspects.

Partition Railway Novels of the Subcontinent

From a rich array of partition literature, the novels I have selected are *Train to Pakistan* (1956) representing Punjab, in the northern part of India, *Ice-Candy-Man* (1989) from Lahore in Pakistan and *Train to India: Memories of Another Bengal* (2009) from Bangladesh in the East. Novels of partition deal with the social and cultural aspects of partition of the subcontinent into two independent countries—India and Pakistan (later East Pakistan became Bangladesh in 1971); and its aftermath, as realistically portrayed from the viewpoint of small border villages, or from people who were caught in the partition and its consequences.

The division of the British colony into India and East and West Pakistan by drawing a line on the map in 1947 was perhaps the last and the most historical stroke of colonization executed by Cyril Radcliffe.[11] The immediate effect of the division of the subcontinent into different sovereignties was the displacement of millions of people. The only familiar space occupied for generations suddenly turned alien with the partition. The displaced Muslims in India and the Hindus in Pakistan had no choice but to flee to the other side for safety beyond the border. This resulted in huge exodus from both the sides depending on the religious identity alone as the partition was based on communal grounds though the motivation was political. Only very few extremely rich and privileged moved either by air or by road. Singh's narrator says right in the beginning that 'they travelled on foot, in bullock carts, crammed into lorries,

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[11]The last Viceroy of colonized India, Lord Mountbatten proclaimed the division   at a press conference on 3rd June 1947 and Sir Cyril Radcliffe drew the line after a lot of political discussion between the British and the Indian leaders including both the Hindus and the Muslims. On August 14, 1947, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan was founded. The following day, the Republic of India was established to the South.

clinging to the sides and roofs of trains' (2). As Maloy Krishna Dhar points out, the development of fast paced political movements cracks the thin fabric of social bondage. Dhar seems to have witnessed a gradual and increasing devastation of the lives of the people around him. He says, 'the Great Exodus took survivors across imaginary lines drawn on cartographers' maps, which promised them no home, land or manna from heaven' (1).

The trains themselves came to represent communal identities of the passengers and made them vulnerable to attack. A train travelling East near the border became a signifier of the Hindu and one travelling west, a symbol of the Muslim. When a 'ghost train' arrived for the second time at Mano Majra, people were sure about its origin. 'Since the engine faced eastward, it must have come from Pakistan' (152), the narrator seems to voice the collective thought of the people. There was no speculation about what the train contained as they had already witnessed the arrival of a train load of dead people.

Special trains called refugee trains started running to both the sides. The refugees trusted and looked upon the railway space, as they assumed it to be, inviolable and secular, a state sponsored space of safety and security. Thus what Marian Aguiar says seems true:

> Railway officials viewed the train as a safe vehicle for relocation, for the rhetoric of modernity that was the legacy of the colonial period promised that the state space of the railway would supersede what appeared as localized violence. (75)

But I observe that the secular did not function as one thought about it, because the communal too had equal accessibility to the space even as the railway functioned as a symbol of British power closely connected with the colonial governance. It was something that has happened for the first time perhaps in human history that special trains carried only dead bodies in it, to its destinations. Mass homicides or ethnic cleansing have occurred many times before during

invasions, World Wars, and the Holocaust[12], etc. but the ghost trains full of dead bodies being transported was something that had no precedence and people were lost as they did not know even how to react.

This is also reflected in *Ice-Candy-Man* as faith in the train's secular space existed even as the partition clashes began to spring. I doubt whether it was the notion of a secular space or the train as secular space that was the people's concern. I think it was the notion of the colonial power that people thought to be in place, which would serve as guarantee for safety rather than its secular credentials, which emerged in discourses probably after the trouble began and in the post independence period. There was undoubtedly a lot of faith in the trains as it is obvious from the example that the condition set by Lenny's parents, while letting her visit Pir Pindo with Imam Din, after the troubles started erupting was that 'they go by train' (Sidhwa 104).

However the government and the notion of the secular and safe were challenged and ironically enough the train journey proved to be the most dangerous as thousands of refugees from both the sides were killed, looted, raped, shot, stabbed and clubbed, and those who perpetrated the crime glorified their cruelty, as 'the very excess of the violence employed is one of the elements of its glory' (Foucault 34). The notion of the secular, as it is today, seems to be not so much a problematic issue during the days of partition, though safety from communal elements was a serious issue. Ian Kerr, a railway historian who has written much on Indian Railways has called the railways of India as 'engines of change'. Kerr comments that, 'for some months the engines of change pulled the trains of death' (Engines 141). Space as mentioned earlier as 'practiced place' and trains as 'travelling space' have become the

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[12]The Holocaust was the systematic, bureaucratic, state-sponsored persecution and murder of six million Jews by the Nazi regime and its collaborators.<https://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005143>

space for death and dead bodies. The function of the trains that moved human beings and commodities changed to become goods trains that carried only dead bodies. Trains became a vehicle for revenge and a cruel means to send political messages.

The impact of colonialism and colonial technologies were experienced in extremely different manners in different parts of the subcontinent and probably the easiest way to understand it is through the narratives from the regions. Partition pangs were experienced most by people of the North and the East and it is engraved in their memories. For people from the South it is almost like someone else's story, as neither the Muslims were evacuated, nor did the refugees arrive in the southern parts, as there was no new boundaries set in those parts. The refugee trains and the fleeing refugees and the ghost trains had been the theme of many railway partition writings and films, along with the horrors that accompanied. Kushwant Singh's novel of partition appears to have started the trend of keeping alive the traumatic memories of the historical bloodshed, massacre and loss followed by many others.

The novels *Train to Pakistan*, *Train to India and Ice-Candy-Man* are about an event in the past that may remain in the memory of the multitude. 'Memory tends to fade and the human subject aware of this fact, nurtures a desire to record and preserve the memories defeating the tide of time by writing memoirs, diaries, autobiographies, official records, and newspaper reports. Historians sometimes collect their data from such writings also to catalogue the events in detail. Some practices of history, make people conduct surveys, interviews, etc. to document what has taken place chronologically, and to have the credibility of what is considered a 'fact'. Some histories are macrohistories[13] and give a generalized view and miss

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[13]Dictionary meaning of macrohistory may be 'a form of large-scale history dealing with large groups of cultures over very long time periods'. (http://www.yourdictionary.com) David Christian has used the label 'macrohistory' for study of the past on very large scales, including the scales of world history and historical sociology, as well as the even larger scales of 'big history', which embrace geological and even cosmological

out the minute details that might have afflicted the lives of the ordinary human subjects. The novel seems to expand and foreground what history leaves out, the effects of the historical events on individuals and the masses—the ultimate sufferers and their often unheard voices lack detailed cataloguing.'[14]

In the partition railway novels the presence of the railways has a crucial role to play in unravelling the historic events and controlling the temporal conceptions and perceptions of village communities. One particular point in time that had rewritten the social and political history of the subcontinent and redrawn its geography was its partition after independence fixing newly drawn borders. Though it seemed to be a political decision and act, its social impact was altogether a different construct, which is reproduced time and again in people's memory as well as in textual and visual media.

Partition novels are also historical novels in which time and space is used to convey the background, the actual trauma and simulation of eye witness' accounts of violence that followed the partition. The railway seems to play a crucial role, and behaves almost like the protagonist of the novels, controlling the flow of events and human lives during the partition. Before the partition, the subcontinent consisted of significantly self-regulating communities in its rural areas that bonded with a common language, culture and solidarity with intermittent minor differences in matters of caste and faith. A slender string of village brotherhood bonded the Hindus, Muslims and the Sikhs, in the villages for centuries. These identities of the pre-partition village communities are common in all the three novels.

time in a paper on 'Macrohistory and Microhistory' at the annual conference of the American Historical Association, organized by Gale in January 2002. Accessed the site on 20-04-016.
[14] Lissamma Kurian. 'Partitioning Time in the Railway Novel *Train to Pakistan*:Mano Majra's Alarm Clock'. *Vidyapith Journal.* Vidyapith (ISSN 0976-5794 Vol. 4 (2016) 49-50.

In *Train to Pakistan*, Singh seems to use a narrative device wherein he authorially exposes the collective response of the whole village, their reactions and grief at the horrors that are thrust upon them, while there is no personal loss of life or personal grief except for the space that is divided, lives that are dislocated, and the railway space that staged a chaos of death that was observed in their own village space. It is a collective grief and all are equally affected. It is the helpless officials who witness the inner space of the ghost trains. The villagers only get to hear certain stories, observe a mass burial from afar, or smoke from the burning bodies near the railway station as the bodies arrived by train and the authorities arranged to burn them in a mass cremation away from the people's view.

With differences more than similarity, Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice-Candy-Man* is close to being the counterpart of *Train to Pakistan* spatially from the other side which projects a Pakistani view of Partition. Sidhwa from the Pakistani view point suggests that people in Pakistan too suffered during the partition as she relates in details that the cities burnt, people killed and burnt savagely and ghost trains arrived with loads of dead bodies in the process of temporal and spatial construction of two free nations India and Pakistan. The Parsees were neutral in both the countries; neither had they taken part in violence nor suffered loss of life (Sidhwa 180-181), whereas active participation of the Sikhs in the riots is well documented. The magistrate in *Train to Pakistan* asks the sub inspector: 'Do you know the Sikhs retaliated by attacking a Muslim refugee train sending it across the border with over a thousand corpses? They wrote on the engine "Gift to Pakistan!" ' (Singh 21).

In *Ice-Candy-Man* all the horrors of partition and communal violence in which the trains were included are gathered into a single tremulous narration of the Ice-Candy-Man that he witnessed in the railway station. Ice-Candy-Man's wait in the railway station for the train had been a long and strenuous one. He waited three whole days in the railway station for the

unscheduled arrival of the train with his relatives, possibly his wife and young children or his sister and her family. After three days the train arrives: a ghost train with only dead passengers to the promised safe space. He announces to Lenny and the group:

> A train from Gurudaspur has just come in,' he announces panting. 'Everyone in it is dead. Butchered. They are all Muslim. There are no young women among the dead! Only two gunny-bags full of women's breasts! (149)

His personal loss and grief alters Ice-Candy-Man from the gentle admirer of Shanta, Lenny's Ayah, to be the perpetrator of evil upon her. In the film adaptation of the narrative, '1947: Earth' (Deepa Mehta film) the Indo-Canadian film maker Deepa Mehta presents a scene of the ghost train which is the core of the film, a scene so grave in its intensity. Dil Nawas (ice-candy-man) waits in the railway station and the mysterious train slowly approaches the station. With the accompaniment of a brilliant mix of light and sounds, Dil Nawas gets to view the inside of the train, and the horror he sees is reflected in his face. The camera's focus on his face lets the viewers understand what he might have seen and the tragedy that has happened, before it moves on into the train. The sound of the train, its slow and dramatic entry into the frame, the long duration of silence with different sounds of musical instruments and the facial expressions of Dil Nawaz create sensations that could recreate the horrors of partition and rekindle their memories.

In the text, it is Lenny who narrates the man's wait, his arrival to her house and his words of grief. In Lenny's narration it appears that the Ice-Candy-Man was a very good person who loved Shanta deeply and whose religion was not even known. It is after witnessing the arrival of the death train that he undergoes a transformation to be a cruel tormentor with a communal mind. He is unlike Krishna Dhar who survived the tragedy with a peaceful demeanour.

Maloy Krishna Dhar through his autobiographical narrative, *Train to India: Memories of Another Bengal* (2009), has established the spatio-temporal existence of Bengal during

different times as the title suggests, memories that are temporally past and another Bengal that was spatially related to that time, and a train journey in search of another space called 'India' from an India, which was the only land he knew so long. It is a graphic account of the comparatively less chronicled (according to Dhar), but turbulent and unforgotten era of Bengali history which was a part of the subcontinent, that became East Pakistan, and later on Bangladesh. Dhar as a grown up person narrates in the first person, from memories of his own childhood days. It is an autobiographical narrative by the author of his childhood and growing up amidst the turbulence of partition of the subcontinent.

I think that it is important to reiterate that the railway is first and foremost a technology of transport that moves on rails, carrying passengers and goods from location to location for a price that extracts combined efforts of machine and man. The innovative steam power driven travel technology transformed a society where distances were 'measured in footsteps and at the speed of bullock carts' (Sidhwa 108), into unbelievable and unimaginable machine driven speed which inspired Karl Marx to write, 'The day is not far distant when, by a combination of railways and steam-vessels, the distance between England and India, measured by time, will be shortened to eight days, and when that once fabulous country will thus be actually annexed to the Western world.'[15] It was already colonized and controlled and a shortened travel time perhaps could not have reduced the spatial distance as there was no actual shrinking of space and geographical barriers in between still existed.

The railway is often said to have altered the temporal and spatial perceptions of the world as it is considered to have achieved 'annihilation of space and time' (Schivelbuch 33), as an expression of the effect of speed and freedom provided by mobility by the train, making its

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[15] Karl Marx. 'The Future Results of British Rule in India'. Written on July 22.1853. Published in the *New-York Tribune*, August 8, 1853.

travel time reduced for any given distance. Hence Marx's observation of possible annexation of India to Europe, with the introduction of the railways too, is a reaction similar to that of the common nineteenth century reaction.

The railway as a modern technological innovation and a symbol of progress was believed to transform humanity with the force of cultural and social changes. The engines of change that chuffed into India during the 1850s, the iron 'monsters'[16] as often called, were ordained to transform the social, religious, political and economic aspects of India. This colonial rhetoric was often challenged in theory as well as in practice in India with its so called passage to modernity as Aziz in E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India* declares, 'nothing embraces the whole of India' (151) because it is a multiple nation by the 'heterodoxy—racial, political, cultural, religious, and mystical', and by the physical landscape of the country (Bloom 36). The railway was used as a means and justification for colonial rule in India while the rhetoric of the trains proclaimed social transformation of the people helping 'the backward country' to achieve development. I think Mano Majra may be a good example as it 'has always been known for its railway station' (Singh 3), but the promises of the new technology like progress and development seem to have not reached the people as represented in the text though there were other places strategically important for the railway and for the British, growing manifold in no time. Trains were introduced in India mainly for the intentions of the British for political and military benefits, commercial and social advantages as it would increase trade, where Indian villages like Mano Majra stood a mute witness with no apparent economic advantage or involvement.

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[16]Peckett & Sons, Bristol, nick named their locomotive 'Mardy Monsters'.The Camden and Amboy Railroad in America built an eight-wheel engine, the Monster, between 1835 and 1838. (John H. White. *A History of the American Locomotive*, *Its Development*: *1830-1880.* New York: Dover Publications, 1996, 46-57**.)**

Village Space in the Railway Novels of Partition—Mano Majra, Pir Pindo and Bhairab

Most of India lived in villages, and it is in villages where the stories of some of the partition railway novels are set. Sir Henry Maine who first idealized the village communities later realized the complexities of the same and declared, 'Indian village communities prove on close inspection to be not simple but composite bodies, including a number of classes with various rights and claims' (123). In spite of the differences in class, rights, and claims the village brotherhood make the people ready to sacrifice their lives to protect one another as the Sikhs in the village declare that they will rather die before anyone attack their Muslim tenants (Singh133). In Pir Pindo, Sikhs and Muslims erupt altogether, 'Our villages come from the same racial stock. Muslim or Sikh, we are basically Jats. We are brothers. How can we fight each other?' (Sidhwa 56)

Dhar shows that life before the unrest of independence and partition was like that primeval time in a 'composite and culturally sublimated society' (ix) in which people shared small joys of life without any religious barriers. When Dhar was a small boy, there seems peace prevailing over his village as he compares it to the eternal energy of creation:

> In the beginning, there was *srishti-stithi-binashbanag shaktibhute* sanatani—the Eternal Energy that caused creation, assured preservation, and inevitable destruction. The eternal energy of creation had endowed my village and part of Bengal with the sweet melodies of nature. (2)

Dhar further explains, 'our peaceful rural community, emotionally bonded together by centuries of love and care, lived together peacefully, until the harmony was shattered by several events' (4). Trains unloading guns, tanks and troops (5) in the railway station, and a rail accident involving train carrying ammunition, are some of the arrangements for the impending turmoil. The spatio-temporal order of the village according to him resembled the high order of the universe at the creation or the beginning of life. Entropy perhaps began to

increase by the arrival of the colonizers and increased stage by stage through the struggle for independence towards freedom, partition and its consequences.

In Dhar's novel, Bhairab the lively railway station connected Calcutta, Dhaka and Mymensingh, with the southernmost tips of East Bengal and there was the wonderful Anderson Railway Bridge over the Meghna, the only bridge to span the turbulent river. The railway station according to Dhar was the major link to the rest of the world as the 'station unravelled new surprises, day in and day out, besides bringing in new faces, carrying away some known faces to destinations beyond the horizon. The station was our telescope to the outer world' (2).

V. A. Shahane argues that Mano Majra, the village is the most important character of the novel *Train to Pakistan* as it not only serves as the backdrop of the novel but also as an inescapable character that unfolds the landscape, linguistic, cultural and crisis specificity. He considers the village to be the protagonist of the novel:

> Mano Majra is the principal protagonist in this drama of agonizing death and pulsating life. The village is more important than the role of any single character in the novel... It is the major character in the book. (68)

I am of the opinion that as much as the village, the technology of travel, the railway is also an appropriate protagonist as the author declares that Mano Majra is known only for its 'railway station'(3). Spatial order of Mano Majra, the fictitious village in which the novel *Train to Pakistan* is set includes a river, a bridge, a tunnel and a railway station. The narrator provides a complete map of the village, the physical representation of its space, with the opening statement, 'Mano Majra is a tiny place' (2). Other than the railway station, there are three brick buildings—the Gurudwara, the Mosque and the home of the village money lender forming a triangle. The rest of the village is a cluster of mud huts about seventy in number, housing Sikhs, the land owners, and Muslims, the tenants. In the text I find that the author

just makes a passing comment on the small colony of shop keepers and hawkers who have grown up around the station, a colony that came into existence to cater to the needs of the railway. I am of the opinion that this business community has most probably migrated from other places as their existence in the village is not accounted for, and their businesses flourished exclusively for the railways, and because of the railways, as the railway station came to exist in that particular place where trains halted; the railway thus providing indirect employment and livelihood for many people.

At a distance of half a mile from the village there is the Sutlej River which is spanned by a railroad bridge and to its eastern end, the railway station (3). The bridge, the tunnel, the station and the tracks that pass through the village are produced or 'constructed railway space'. This map is not a cartographer's creation but a narrative or textual representation— the spatial story of the village. The narrator gives a complete picture of the village as a place that has a name, a location and coordinates, which identify the place as a border village, between the newly formed countries, India and Pakistan, but affiliated to the Indian side.

Pir Pindo and Bhairab comparatively have lesser space in the narratives than Mano Majra and Pir Pindo does not have a railway station like Mano Majra and trains stopped short of two miles at the nearby village Thokar. Trains had not been introduced in all the regions in the subcontinent, especially in difficult terrains and strategically weaker sections, from the view point of commerce, politics, etc.   Surprising as it seems, even in the twenty first century there are places still not connected by the railways, and people who have never seen a train in India.

The railway has a unique modern public space in its stations, trains, etc. In Mano Majra and in Bairab, the railway appears to be important. They had siding tracks' where trains had to wait often as the bridge across the rivers had only a single track. Single lines only were built

on railway bridges as the railway ran on single lines initially. Even in case of double lines, traffic on bridges could be easily scheduled through yards and loop lines, as it was more cost effective than constructing double bridges, besides the technical issues of railway bridge building[17]. Though none of the express trains and many of the passenger trains did not stop at Mano Majra, the goods trains stopped for hours shedding and collecting wagons (4). This shows that Mano Majra perhaps was a junction in which different branch lines met. Goods wagons, meant for different destinations, are separated from and attached with different trains in such junctions. Such junctions are not important nowadays as trains run directly from end to end rather than stopping and changing at junctions (Ghosh 6).

Mano Majra Railway station seems to be a small station where the station master with just one assistant performs all the duties for the smooth running of the station activities. This in fact is the way in which small stations (road side stations) function with the same official performing duties of different offices. The station space and its activities of arrivals, departures, signaling, etc. do not affect the rest of the village space and its activities. I observe this as the villagers, when they are curious, try to watch the activities from afar, and there is no personal contact with the railway officials, who possibly do not belong to the village. I think they are outsiders because if they had been from the village they were sure to have participated in the meetings in the Sikh temple and their names and positions would have been introduced.

For the villagers the railway provided the experience of an institutionalized system as I observe no other form of institution other than the Mosque and the Sikh Gurudwara existed in the village Mano Majra. The railway space is structured into an organized space, which is at

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[17]Railway bridge building involves a lot of technicalities, analysis and planning. For some interesting details refer to R.R Bhandari. 'Bridges: The Spectacular Feat of Indian Engineering'. *Indian Railways: Glorious 150 Years.* New Delhi: Government of India.2005, 59-72.

times even out of bounds for the villagers. I find that a railway station is perhaps the best testimony of Foucault's idea of organizing disciplined places that create 'complex spaces that are at once architectural, functional and hierarchical. It is these spaces that provide fixed position and permit circulation' (148). I find that the railway has its architecture designed with hierarchical functions to be employed. Perhaps an insight form J.N. Sahni provides a list of all that is included in the railway system:

> The permanent way, bridges, viaducts, culverts, tunnels, stations, marshalling yards, sheds, signals, steam, diesel and electric locomotives, coaches, wagons, rail motors, steamers, telephones, wireless and telegraph equipment, power houses, workshops, printing presses, coal mines, hotels and restaurants, hospitals, store depots, marine establishments, etc., are some of the major items which go to make up the modern railway system (1-2).

Thus though the railway signifies travel technology, it is not just that alone but a complex mix of a multitude of technologies, disciplines, and expertise that form the system. An ordinary passenger may have an encounter with the station, and the railway compartment, but be ignorant of the rest of it.

Though the trains are means of transportation of people and goods, the people of Mano Majra do not travel, neither they send any goods nor get any through the trains. Mano Majra's railway space is a space linking different parts of the subcontinent but the people passively observed the trains—the symbol of colonial power, unaffected, just as they are of the events in the rest of the country. The passive observation of the colonial power does not remain long but soon gets into a mutual exchange and interaction of culture and habits. The narrator says that the people are 'very conscious of trains' (Singh 4) and know about the working of railways by observing the activities.

This consciousness or rather the awareness got assimilated into the daily life of Mano Majra, though they were unaware of the technicalities and the disciplining that the trains were performing. The villagers still lived in a state of peaceful ignorance, without being aware of

the political upheavals that shook portions of the subcontinent that were partitioned and that the British had been leaving. The subinspector of police reporting to the magistrate about Mano Majra gives an illustration of this ignorance "I am sure no one in Mano Majra even knows that the British have left and the country is divided into Pakistan and Hindustan" (Singh 24). Singh's presentation of the village echoes Marx's observation of India as 'undignified, stagnatory, and vegetative life, passive sort of existence'.[18] Singh presents a rather stagnated passive existence of the village, perhaps, as the groundwork for the massive event that was to be staged—the Partition.

The spatial stories of the villages are narrated as though two different yet parallel civilizations existed in the same village at the same point of time. One is of modern technological civilization of mobility and communication and the other; a traditional agrarian society. This oasis of peace would not have always existed as Singh highlights it, for, a fully operational railway station, a shunting yard, the tracks, a bridge and a tunnel could not have been installed overnight in the village. Singh describes the railway too as a natural, given part of the village just like the river, the pond and the mud houses. Singh seems to be in agreement with Sahni who observes that, 'An average person has come to take the railways for granted; almost like the hills, the rivers, the lakes, the forests and other similar permanent factors in his normal existence' (1). This I think is by habit and familiarity that people begin to take even the oppressive factors like caste, class, patriarchy, capitalism, primogeniture, etc. as natural.

Considering the peaceful life of the village, I am of the opinion that Mano Majra and Bairabh as well as Thokar, certainly must have experienced the onslaught of the railways during its

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[18]Karl Marx. 'The Future Results of British Rule in India'. Written on July 22.1853. Published in the *New York Tribune*, August 8, 1853.

inception. Land acquisition for the rail project, to begin with, would have resulted in some getting a fortune and leaving the village, some, resisting the project and yet others finding their land divided by the rail and its accompaniment of hardships as it usually happens.

The chaos of earth work, bridge building and tunnel construction might have taken years with the forefathers of the villagers turning for the first time into wage labourers. As Sir Bartle Frere, Governor of Bombay Presidency, had expressed in his speech during the opening of the Bhore Ghat that 'Giving a fair day's wages for a fair day's labour' (Kerr, Engines 41), was unknown before the railway age in India. Indian labourers who realized the power and value of labour started migrating and mobilizing themselves for better wages. A large number of migrant labourers might have descended upon the village as the railway construction demanded. Some villagers perhaps got themselves established as labourers into a capitalist system; a change over from the seemingly practiced feudal or semi-feudal system.

As Ian Kerr points out that division of labour in railway construction in India was such that the harsh manual labour was of the natives, while skilled labour, engineering, and supervisory work was done by the British (Engines 12). A native family in its entirety was engaged in the earthwork, and hence the whole family migrated to places where the work was to begin, from the already completed sites. Another division was among the labourers, while men did the digging; women and children moved the dug up mud and stones (Kerr, Building 86, 87), a sort of division of labour that accommodated women and children too into the construction process. It is often mentioned that women and children were paid less than men but the exact amount paid to them is perhaps not available. The payment scheme for Indian labourers doing earthwork was somewhat as follows. An unskilled worker who could dig to carry from borrow-pit to embankment 100 cubic feet per day, and if an unskilled labourer in the area was getting four *annas* a day, the earthwork rate was Rs 2-8 per 1000 cubic feet (Kerr Building

129). I gather from my readings that as the families worked together, the work perhaps was assessed collectively, and paid accordingly.

Hostility towards technology may have existed and been expressed by the superstitious villagers. Some people perhaps rejected the railways and opposed it as a 'hazardous and dangerous venture' and as a 'premature and expensive undertaking' (Sahni 7). Defeating all odds, when the construction commenced, utter chaos must have enveloped the village resembling an earthquake or area devastated by war. It seems possible that Charles Dickens' account of the advent of the railway might have been near the description of this village too. The village might have witnessed 'enormous heaps of earth and clay thrown up', 'bridges that led nowhere; thoroughfares that were wholly impassable', 'fragments of unfinished walls and arches, and piles of scaffolding, and wilderness of bricks', 'hundred thousand shapes and substances of incompleteness wildly mingled out their places, upside down, burrowing in the earth, aspiring in the air, mouldering in the water, and unintelligible as any dream' (Dickens 79)—the most common sights of any railway construction site.

The village space of the railway construction site would not have remained an oasis of peace, or sustained a stagnated static life surrounded by the chaos surrounding railway construction. Accidents, probably occurred as it was common in bridge and tunnel collapse during construction, killing many workers. It is also possible to conjecture that epidemics in temporary unhealthy settlements, perhaps, claimed more lives which are most probably not even accounted for, even in the history of the railways. I am of the opinion that reflections on such probable historical backgrounds to the railways in the villages probably became immaterial in front of the grave incidents that were to be staged, and hence the authors present only two major threads of narrative sequences—the pre-partition static and uneventful life, temporally regulated by trains (in Mano Majra), and the post-partition

pandemonium wherein trains play real as well as metaphoric roles in dividing the land or unifying it. Trains started relocating people who suddenly seem to be located wrongly in the new spatial ordering and strange new nationality post-partition.

 The railway itself was partitioned dividing its engines, coaches, staff, etc. Sahni points out that 'the rehabilitation of a war-battered railway system, and rapid restoration of its operational efficiency to suit the needs of the nation's expanding economy' (162) was confronted by the Government after independence and partition. In 1947 the railways became India's national network called the Indian Railways (IR). The Acworth Committee in 1921 had suggested the division of railways into Western, Eastern, and Southern divisions. This regrouping was not fully accepted during the British period and it was after partition in 1951 that six zonal administrations were created adding Central, Northern and North Eastern railways,[19] to the already existing zones.

Space Divided: Land Divided

Marian Aguair argues: 'Colonial rhetoric presented the railway space as a means of amalgamating different religions and castes into a homogenous nation' (7). The members of this 'imagined community' (Anderson 37) of the supposedly homogenous nation devoid of religious and caste differences were in reality multi-linguistic, multi-ethnic and multi-religious. When the British decided to leave the country a redistribution of space was necessitated among its inhabitants and between the new nations. 'The art of distribution,' according to Foucault was a 'question of distributing individuals in a space in which one might isolate them' (144). Such isolation in the space of the trains supposed to achieve

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[19]G.S Khosla. *A History of Indian Railways.* New Delhi: Ministry of Railways.1988, 208.

discipline and regulation of the public space became the space of violence and ethnic cleansing by the non-state elements.

A third class compartment in India was always overcrowded; in a travel experience with almost two hundred people in a compartment meant for fifty with an argument erupting at every few minutes is narrated by Kushwant Singh (41-43). An effort to read in the train by Iqbal in *Train to Pakistan* attracts attention from the whole crowd with enquiries that stretched to the length of the night, in contrast to the European train passengers trying to hide their face while reading, in order to avoid contact with co-passengers. The brevity of the journey also seems to have discouraged conversation and making friends (Schivelbusch 74). The Indian scene is completely in contrast with Michel de Certeau's narration of a railway space:

> Nothing is moving inside or outside the train. The unchanging traveller is pigeonholed, numbered, and regulated in the grid of the railway car, which is a perfect actualization of the rational utopia...everything has its place in a grid work. (111)

The concept of the compartment space as a 'rational utopia' is defeated in the scene above and also what followed later on in such crowded compartments.

Railway space was defined by technology and controlled by the colonial government. People developed a kind of trust in this space and considered it to be the safest means to relocate themselves into a nation space (Aguiar xx) to which I think they expected to belong culturally, linguistically and communally. Though the people belonged to different communities like Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, etc. the notion of a colonial Government was somehow neutral and above communal demarcations in its space as the *lambardar* in *Train to Pakistan* declares: 'We were better off under the British. At least there was security' (Singh 53). This faith that the human subject could expect to enjoy safety was to be shattered during

179

the partition defying all the preconceived notions of modernity brought in by colonial technology.

Understanding Time and Partitioning Time

Different theories on time throughout the history of humanity[20] consider time as a concept—absolute, relational, intuitive, or as a fourth dimension of space, etc. seem to have permeated to the masses and influenced the understanding of the notion of time as it is analyzed in a previous chapter. In their effort to understand the nuances of time people relate to the concept of time differently depending mainly on their individual subjective experiences. David Harvey argues that the 'objective conceptions of time and space are necessarily created through material practices and processes which serve to reproduce social life' (240). Time and space is then associated with matter and material practices.

'An agrarian society like Mano Majra or Pir Pindo, engaged in agricultural activities may experience the cyclical or circular orientation of time enforced by the cyclical events of agricultural production, year after year, guided by the circular variations of the seasons. It may be possible that the notion of cyclical time perceived thus could change if the agrarian mode of production changed to industrialization and capitalism. This change may occur because the industrial production advances linearly, independent of even the seasonal interventions. Engaged in such a mode of material production of linear continuity, one eventually may perceive the linearity of time. Such changes in perception take place in a considerable duration of time and space as Henry Bergson argues: 'Perception is never a mere contact of the mind with the object present; it is impregnated with memory—images

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[20]Immanuel Kant, Isaac Newton, Gottfried Leibniz and Albert Einstein are a few of the major names in this context.

which complete it as they interpret it' (170). Memory, images of memory and perception according to Bergson do not occur apart from each other. Considering this, I have formed an opinion that as a change was brought in by the technology punctually announcing arrivals and departures of trains through whistles and sounds, people of Mano Majra, perhaps developed a new perception incorporating their memory and the new encounter with punctuality.

Changes in modes of production (from feudalism to capitalism) and development of a global economic system probably contribute to an altered temporality and a cultural transformation in general as people begin living by the clock and employ new jargon like 'scarcity of time', 'time is money', etc. A rural agrarian society generally followed a task oriented temporal order as Andy Crabtree suggests:

> Task–orientation rather than an orientation to mathematical time governed work in pre-industrial society, which is to say that the idea of working for a fixed period of time was quite alien: you did what had to be done, not more… (2)

Tasks such as milking the cow, sowing the seed or harvesting the crop for example once started, had to be completed irrespective of the time factor. The clock oriented temporal order of the industry was the new 'time-based regime' regulated by the supervisor who 'signalled when the day began, when breaks started and finished, and when the working day was at an end' (Crabtree 2). Mano Majra, as I gather might have had a task oriented time scheme but have deviated from it and started living 'by the train,' an almost equivalent to clock time. For me it looks they followed trains as one follows a clock and the trains seem to undertake the duty of fixing the duration of tasks rather than tasks deciding the length of time.

It seems as though there are two different temporalities existing simultaneously in the village. A pastoral agrarian Indian village that lived in a time of individual land owners, and tenants who 'shared the tilling with the owners,' (Singh 2) and a fast, modern industrial time represented by the railways seem to co-exist in Mano Majra. I think this can be considered as

'heterogeneous'[21] time as Partha Chatterjee defines it as: 'these "other" times are not mere survivors from a pre-modern past; they are new products of the encounter with modernity itself. One must therefore call it, the heterogeneous time of modernity' (7). The temporal order of Mano Majra too appeared to be an encounter of the people with a symbol of modernity—the railway (Kurian 51-52).

As I have mentioned earlier (Chapter 1, Time Consciousness) temporal awareness and some sort of tracking of time must have commenced with the creation of humanity, with certain means of its measurement and the people of Mano Majra too would have regulated their activities with the help of sunlight, sounds, and smells and synchronized their individual circadian rhythms[22], their biological clocks[23] and a general temporal rhythm in the village. The arrival of the railway into the village seemed to have put an end to these age old temporal practices perhaps beginning with disruptions of a construction site with its noise and confusion involving the arrival of many people and flow of money and materials.

The process that the construction of the railway brought in everywhere was experienced as large scale chaos and confusion. Natural light, sounds and smell probably got replaced by artificial light, besides the new sounds and smells of construction sites. Once the railway settled in, it ran according to a strictly patterned timetable. Michael Foucault calls the timetable 'an old inheritance' suggested by the monastic communities that soon spread, to 'establish rhythms,' to 'impose particular occupations,' and to 'regulate the cycles of

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[21]Partha Chatterjee is of the opinion that in the postcolonial world time is heterogeneous and unevenly dense. He suggests the industrial capitalists delaying the closing of a business deal because they hadn't yet heard from their respective astrologers and industrial workers who would not touch a new machine until it had been consecrated with appropriate religious rites as some examples of heterogeneous time.

[22] For more on Circadian Rhythm Joseph Bass. 'Circadian Topology of Metabolism'. *Nature.*491, 348–356 (15 November 2012) doi: 10.1038/nature11704. Online.

[23]Biological clocks are genetically encoded oscillators that allow organisms to anticipate changes in the light–dark environment that are tied to the rotation of Earth. It is an innate mechanism of the body that regulates its rhythmic and periodic cycles, as that of sleeping and waking. For more see <http://www.nature.com/nature/journal/v491/n7424/full/nature11704.html>

repetition' (Foucault 149), to ensure discipline. I think the railway timetable which aimed at the rhythmic functioning of the system imposed a strict temporal discipline upon the trains, and as I would like to draw from Foucault, a colonial 'regime of power.'[24] For the passengers, negligence in adhering to the train's timetable would definitely result in the misery of missing a train. Since they had the option of the train they had to be punctual and therefore disciplined according to the railway time. Though the people of Mano Majra did not have to travel by train in the narrative, a kind of European punctuality slowly got merged with the collective consciousness of the people.

The trains just move ahead in a straight line to their destination according to a fixed timetable. This linear movement when repeated daily gives an impression of cyclical repetition which people could adopt without much effort into their daily routine. The regularity of trains slowly began regulating the people's daily chores in Mano Majra and its temporal order set off to be dictated to by certain events—the event of a train arriving, the event of a train's shunting, or the event of a train crossing the bridge and moving ahead as there was a train to mark the time of every major activity of the village.

> Before day break, the mail train rushes through on its way to Lahore, and as it approaches the bridge, the driver invariably blows two long blasts on the whistle. In an instant, all Mano Majra comes awake. (4)

The mail train's whistle is the wake up alarm of the village and as it is mentioned it awakens the whole of the village. In the novel, trains seem to be punctual so that people depended on them. People began to live 'by the train' streamlining their sequence of activities of the day according to the movements of the trains right from the wake up alarm to the bed-time bell, like the timetable of a strict regime.

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[24] 'Regime of power' and 'regime of truth' are two terms used by Foucault, in many of his works through which he endows a kind of political notion of regime to 'truth' just like the 'regime of power'. See Foucault (1984) 74.

As the people wake up, the crows begin to caw and the owls fly back to the perches. It is as though the people are waiting for the signals from the trains to begin and end their sequence of activities. Or perhaps the train is acting like a surveyor of people's activities in the foreground of an agrarian society. The sounds of trains early in the morning as well as in the evening prompt the religious activities of the Mullah and the Sikh priest, some of which are ablutions and chanting of prayers. These seemed to be similar to the tolling of monastic bells alerting the monks for various religious activities which suggest that in Indian villages too mythical or religious time existed prior to **'**secular,' 'industrial time' (Lee Goff 29) similar to what was the practice in Europe and many other parts of the world.

In the novel, the Mullah and the Sikh priest say their prayers, and by the time the goods train leaves, the people are asleep. Activities**,** guided thus by the presence of the train**,** that begin early in the morning continue till Mano Majra goes to bed and falls asleep. The trains, railway time, and the sequence of the day, proceed in a mechanical order from morning till late night guiding and ordering work, rest and leisure of the people from the village:

> By the time the 10.30 morning passenger train from Delhi comes in, life in Mano Majra has settled down to its dull daily routine. Men are in the fields. Women are busy with their daily chores... As the midday express goes by, Mano Majra stops to rest. Men and children come home for dinner and the siesta hour... when the evening passenger from Lahore comes in, everyone gets to work again. The cattle are rounded up and driven back home to be milked and locked in for the night. The women cook the evening meal... When the goods train steams in they say to each other, 'There is the goods train.' It is like saying goodnight' (5).

It is a strange relationship between the human and the machine as it evolved, on one the hand, humans driving the machine and on the other, the machine driving the human beings and directing certain practices that slowly develop into a part of their culture. Proximity of the railway is the only encounter by the people with modern technology in an otherwise rustic life.

Though not imposed by any external force, this technology like a 'regime of power' of modernity, the 'train consciousness' seems leading to generate a 'time consciousness' among the people, a kind of an ordering that is taking place with technology (re)ordering culture. I say this because the agrarian task oriented work culture is evidently reordered to a clock oriented work culture by the train technology that is directed strictly by clock time.

The technology of the train though transformed the temporal notions and practices of the village directly; the people still seem to lead an idyllic life with their order of daily events being unaffected and untouched by the events that take place all over the country. Singh has represented the life in the village parallel to the colonial administrators and writers like Sir Henry Maine (1876) and Baden Powell (1892) who theorized and stereotyped the Indian village. Indian villages were exhibited as a classic example of the 'changelessness' of the Indian way of life in the rural areas, as Charles Metcalfe's minutes suggests that:

> They seem to last where nothing else lasts, dynasty after dynasty tumbles down; revolution succeeds to revolution... but the village community remains the same. (1832)

Though it is not possible for anything to remain unchanged for a long time, Singh has succeeded in presenting a static village community for some time in the narrative. I think changes like the establishment of at least a primary school or a primary health centre was inevitable in the village. Mano Majra had a fully-fledged railway system installed and operated in the village and thus was connected to the rest of the country, though Singh has selected to ignore the point. Perhaps he ignored the early changes to highlight the magnitude of changes that were yet to occur (Kurian 56).

Though all the three novels are set in almost the same time period Singh's novel seems to exist in a 'backward' time, as the only change in the village that Singh highlights is that the operations of railway technology had got deeply rooted into the culture and consciousness of the people. This consciousness was stimulated by the possibility of a punctuality that they

could adopt to regulate their mundane daily chores perhaps because they had no other temporal guidance to depend upon in the village. I find it odd that there is no display of public time in the vicinity of the village like a tower clock or any other time tracking device; or Singh perhaps has decided not to mention them in order to show how railway time worked in the village. In any case the railway seems to have created an inroad into the life of the village people along with its modern temporality. However the narrator's observation about the existence of peace and continuity as 'It has always been so, until the summer of 1947' (6) hints at the forthcoming events that would shake the base of the last 'oases of peace' (2), Mano Majra, when the railway stopped running its regular trains and started running the 'Ghost trains' (Singh 81) at odd hours.

The railway seems to function like a link between the colonial and post-colonial world with continuity as they are depicted in the narrative. It featured the colonial rhetoric of progressive mission, change and transformation at one point of time; got into the partition violence and troubles, and emerged as a symbol of an independent nation in its construction. Where the subcontinent is broken, village brotherhood is shattered and everything is upside down, the trains managed to salvage its battered bits to start afresh.

The partition novels exhibit one of the most significant moments in the history of the Indian subcontinent: the moment when the subcontinent was physically broken by redrawing boundaries politically, imposing a new identity to the human subjects who came within its ambit with respect to the side of the line where they happened to find themselves to be at that time. I observe in these narratives how time seemed to move fast all of a sudden in the village from a pastoral lethargy of years to a tumultuous present with abrupt dislocations, and violent movements to an uncertain future and how people change the way in which they consider time.

Though the initial and the ultimate aim of the division that was made known, was to get rid of communal tension, it is a known fact that violence escalated to its peak immediately after the Partition. It is gathered from the novels that because of a politically staged action, unaware and untouched by the power equations, millions got stranded along the borders at a time of frightening violence and this perhaps is the outcome of most of the high level political decisions which afflict people on the ground even today. People were dislocated and forced to migrate to uncertainty, as the only land they had known, turned hostile to hunt them out as Imam Baksh in the novel feels that they needed more than one night to clear out things in their homes that had taken their fathers and grandfathers hundreds of years to accumulate (135). It is not the material possessions that the Imam talks about (because they had bare minimum necessities for survival as is given in the narrative) but the life, society and culture they had built up in the village. Baksh's statement summarizes the people's time consciousness; how they understood time as both expansive and instantaneous (Kurian 57).

I think it is worth recalling that Singh has used the regularity of trains and then in comparison with the erroneous behaviour later, as a powerful narrative device to enhance the effects he wanted to bring out, while comparing the prior and post-partition scenarios in the country. It is a known fact that immediately after partition the regular train schedule was suspended for running the refugee trains and there were plenty of other issues like the partition of 'rolling stock'[25] and the availability of staff on either side. This suspended schedule affected the subjects inside and outside the narrative of Khushwant Singh's novel, differently. The temporality of the trains got disturbed during the partition and along with that the temporal practices of the people of Mano Majra. People were so accustomed with the train's timetable

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[25]Generic term for all types of railway vehicles other than locos, which are usually referred to separately. For more railway vocabulary see, Jackson (1997).

scheduling their daily life; perhaps they had forgotten how else time could be reckoned to schedule their daily activities. This affected them in such a way that they had no idea as to how to behave. The narrator continues with his account with the altered temporality of the trains during the partition:

> Early in September the time schedule in Mano Majra started going wrong. Trains became less punctual than ever before and many more started to run through at night. Some days it seemed as though the alarm clock had been set for the wrong hour. On others it was as if no one had remembered to wind it. People stayed in bed late without realizing that times had changed and the mail train might not run through at all. Children did not know when to be hungry, and clamoured for food all the time. In the evenings everyone was indoors before sunset and in bed before the express train came by—if it did come by. (81)

The sudden breakdown of the schedule spread chaos in general as the transportation system broke down, and it seems that the villagers found themselves in a flux, a timelessness they failed to comprehend. I am of the opinion that the railway was the only colonial institution in the village that had got well rooted into the conscience of the villagers in the novel as it signified a stable continuation and authority. Linearity of time came to a standstill, or rather in for a reversal, thereby to prove the counter narrative of the colonial symbol of 'progress to modernity,' because the train running on a linear path was somewhat parallel to the linear motion of time. The train stopped and the regularity of time got disrupted. The promise of progress and passage to modernity got reversed post-partition, into times of 'savagery' and 'brutality' as depicted in the novel. It appears that the normal flow of time was disturbed as a properly scheduled 'normal' running of trains gave way to the 'death trains' (Aguiar 73). As the railway timetable crashed the regular trains stopped running completely. Though this was common in *Ice- Candy-Man* as well as in *Train to India*, time consciousness of people does not seem to suffer as perhaps they had other technologies to sustain them.

In Dhar's *Train to India*, the Bengali speaking people both Hindus and Muslims lived in a tiny corner of the universe beside their rivers, lakes, fields, orchards, trees, animals and birds.

He further shows that they had their common folk deities, dargas and common songs without any communal distinctions before they started falling apart on communal lines. Children had their school, teachers, and friends who shared the eternal energy of creation that is love and companionship. It is seen in the narrative that the time when children usually are curious of trains and railway engines, observing and learning about them, the author was forced into scenes of violence and death with the concern of saving his life as well as of others. Since it was a sudden growing up, and not a gradual strengthening, Dhar had to have a long duration of time to attain the maturity he needed. He explains the situation:

> Events moved so fast between 1945 and 1950 that I did not have the luxury of growing up gradually, learning leisurely and forging the steel inside through the usual slow process of maturing. Events forced me and the other children around to mature at a faster rate and catch up with the pace of history that was churning like a cyclone and changing our lives mercilessly. (ix)

In an atmosphere charged with political and communal unrest, confusion ruled the lives of the children and they seem to have lost their childhood, their temporality and space, while adults got engaged in mindless violence. In addition to the lost childhood, the violence they witnessed and the stability they lost contribute to a disoriented state of mind of the children, as it is seen that children of Mano Majra clamoured for food all the time as they did not know when to feel hungry (Singh 81).

Refugee Trains

It seemed that the communal division initiated by the British and left to simmer was picked up by the trains, the symbol of colonial power to reach its culmination. We have historical records to show that a 'Refugee Rail' control was set up in Lahore to oversee the refugee

189

movement in the refugee trains called 'India Special' or 'Pakistan Special'.[26] Ravinder Kaur's reflection on the 'refugee trains' is that 'due to their central role as a preferred means of urban evacuation, they have become symbolic of the last journey of the masses' (2006). The refugee trains were necessary, as normal train service between two unfriendly neighbouring countries was not possible. Special trains provided free travel to those subjects who suddenly turned strangers in their homes due to the ideological differences that were the basis of the division. The Hindus living among the Muslim majority, and the Muslims among the Hindu majority, had to escape by any available means to stay alive. I think of all the modes of refugee movement, it was the tightly packed trains, with the distressed and drained poor and middle class that got immortalized in the nation's narrative; the narrative of a nation which appeared to be paradoxically in reverse gear in time (Aguiar 90). It appears to me, that the refugees trusted the railway to reach them to safety as they perceived the trains as secular and inviolable under the British system that was considered to be the symbols of modernity.

In *Train to India* partition violence enacted in railway space and Dhar as a young boy had a narrow escape heroically saving his mother during a train journey. While playing at the railway yard with friends, he had witnessed the Chittagong mail with three compartments of dead bodies (47). In another place it is mentioned that the Chittagong-Calcutta mail arrived late and empty except for slain human bodies (186). During a nightmarish rail journey that he witnessed the garish killing of innocent people: 'I looked out and saw several human bodies rolling down to the river below, all drenched with blood and severe wounds. I counted 20 bodies' (232). Confused and vigilant children Lenny and Dhar and the impressions of the childhood is a metaphor for the childhood of the two new nations, just as the metaphor of blood in the process of birth, as observed during the birth of these nations.

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[26]Official report by India's Ministry of Information on population movements, 2nd November 1947 (DO 133/60).

Temporality and Social Change

Mano Majra a peaceful village during the colonial days got itself regulated into a temporal order without the assistance of a clock or any other time measuring device as it is understood from the text. Precise and standardized use of time was central to industrialization and the railways as Anthony Giddens points out, 'Coordination across time is the basis for the control of space' (19). Time consciousness of Mano Majrians was fully controlled by the trains more as a habit than by authority. The idyllic life of the village would not call for any strict time table according to the clock time to follow. They followed the trains like the Benedictine monks, who followed hours of the clock for their daily activities in the sixteenth century. The monastic rules and regulations were enforced by tolling bells for offices, meals, prayers, etc. and activities were separately written with precise time details in the Rule of Saint Benedict (Van Rossum 35-37). Trains functioned as the market or the church bells for the village, ringing the reminders for their day to day activities. Mano Majra had its unwritten temporal order imposed by the trains and enforced voluntarily by the villagers.

The railway has forced its time table on human subjects to adhere to its authority, or to face the consequences of missed connections and trauma that followed; examples of which are available in plenty as large volumes of travel experiences as well as fiction. The concept of linear time, a landmark of western modernity and maintained by Christianity got integrated into a different culture of a faraway place, through the punctuality of the engines of change and progress. This cultural integration and punctuality in the case of Mano Majra, I think is neither imposed through the force of authority, nor accepted by the necessity of mobility, but due to convenience and familiarity. It is an artificial consciousness because the temporal perception acquired through the observation of natural events like the length of shadows,

position of the sun, etc. is extinct and the artificial consciousness is imposed through sounds produced by the machine—its whistles (Singh 4). Mano Majra seems to have not been affected by any constraints to follow a strict time pattern, but its temporal order is dictated by certain events—the event of a train arriving, the event of a train's shunting, or the event of a train crossing the bridge and moving ahead.

The activities guided by the train, that begin early in the morning continues till Mano Majra goes to bed and falls asleep in a mechanical order. The narrator gives a complete timetable of the village as though drawn out of the railway timetable of trains with special instructions for the villagers to follow. It proceeds in a mechanical order as the machine that works relentlessly from morning till late night guiding and ordering work, rest and leisure of the people of the village. This strange relationship between the man and the machines is perhaps absolutely unintentional. This order of events repeated over and again day after day continued till 1947; until the life of Mano Majra altered completely and forever.

The railway seems to reflect every mood of the land, linking with the outer world during times of peace and transmitting confusion during the turbulent times and violence during the riots. Dhar says after the partition trouble began, the nature of the station changed in strange manners that, 'Our railway station presented a confusing collage. Strange people descended on our lands—white, black and Indian troops. Some trains carried them to unknown southern destinations' (5). Goods trains carried soldiers and consignments of weapons which were many times stopped or derailed by the emerging nationalists to loot them for resistance and rebellions. Lutfa, the daughter of a bonded labourer of the family who headed the young brigade obtains 'information of transit schedule of a goods train to the eastern frontier, via Sylhet, carrying consignments of artillery shells and assorted weapons' (10). Childhood games of the children gave way to spy work in the railway space and children seem to have

taken up the roles of informers passing information about transportation of armaments, military personnel and equipment suddenly changing their role as children in society.

Time is a crucial factor in the railway system as accurately specific grading and utilization is essential for its successful operation. Spatialization of time by the railway is visible in the form of a timetable with the scheduled arrivals and departures. It is strange that a place like Mano Majra collectively follow the spatialized (through its timetables) and ritualized (through the scheduled arrivals and departures) time schedule of the railway for social and personal obligations rather than some natural or traditional means of time measuring.

It seems what the empire, its modern technology and its education could not do to discipline Indians; the railways could manage with a kind of authority generated from the necessity of the people, which the railways created. I think that one must recall the anonymous racist traveller's humorous lines that appeared in the Fraser's Magazine[27] and quoted in almost all the railway writing proclaims the ability and authority of the train making the natives punctual at stations for the trains, a punctuality that had failed to be inculcated by education and science. That was the type of influence that the trains had on the temporal practices of humankind. Mano Majra seemed to enjoy a kind of peaceful order regulated by trains though it seemed like a rather different temporal conception. It seems even the dacoits planned their looting time, according to the train schedules as well as lovers their undercover meetings (Singh 7, 17). The sudden disintegration of its temporal schedule with which they were well accustomed causes chaos in the village. The train stopped; bringing time to a standstill like 'an immobility that arrested time' (Blanchot 5). It was as though time froze, a situation

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[27]*The Night Mail Trains in India*. Fraser's Magazine for Town and Country (London: John W Parker and Son) December 1856, 680.Vol. LIV.

difficult to visualize as people are left with no guidance for the daily chores as Singh has presented the village Mano Majra after the trains stopped.

People had forsaken the signs of nature for the rhythms that were created by the machine. In *Train to Pakistan*, Singh attempts to represent the whole village that was in a temporal flux. Singh concludes the story with an open-ended but positive note, though tragic in effect, in one sentence, 'the train went over him, and went on to Pakistan' (190). It is often observed that different passions aroused in troubled times lead to unruly mob violence and cruelties, but in the end as the body of Jugga met with the machine, the train and a train load of lives were saved; love triumphed, and perhaps a renewed hope was reinstalled—that a time of peace would reappear.

All the three railway novels though from different spatial settings have a common narrative frame and an event upon which the narrative is based. They differ in narrative style as Sidhwa and Dhar has child narrators and Singh has a third person adult omniscient narrator. Sidhwa narrates the story through an innocent eight year old Parsee girl Lenny's eyes and voice. Most of the narrative is about her young and beautiful Ayah and her many affairs with her many admirers and with Lenny's Parsee family affairs, and her growing up amidst the partition upheavals. Lenny, the child narrator with her physical disability has a limited spatial exposure. She moves between her house in Warris Road and her Godmother's place in Jail Road in Lahore. As her movement is limited she lives in a world of her own observing everything minutely as it is a limited space she is able to explore, that includes her trips to the garden with her Ayah.

Dhars' child narrator is his own childhood and the narrative goes as his own experience of partition is retold. Thus, Dhar's novel emphasizes specific, observed details from his childhood without any added colour of imagination or bias of any sort (ix). He has introduced

the other characters, mostly his family and his friends, by locating them precisely in time and space and events as unfolded before his eyes as he himself was a part of it. He reflects upon the concerns of partition which affected his society and people in the Eastern regions of the subcontinent. Dhar not only narrates vividly the partition and exodus, but also the social and mental concerns of his life after reaching India.

Dhar himself partakes in the exodus and his train journey symbolically continues even after reaching India. He continues his train journey mentally even after arriving at the destination as he says: 'I felt I was still travelling in a train, inside India that refused to stop. Calcutta did not appear to be the station of destiny' (287). Uncertainties and difficulties in life urged him to continue the journey, as the train journey has continuity whereas arriving at the destination is some kind of an end and one has to settle down to. It took quite some time for him to disembark from the train to detach himself from the symbolic journey and return to the realities of life. For Dhar the train finally stopped into light and a new life when he secured admission and started his schooling again. He says that, 'I was in the new India. My train had finally stopped' (302). His teacher of English, Sadhan Chakravarty helped him enormously to complete his train journey to India. With his teacher's help he started a new journey, to live and learn about the new India (303). It was a symbolic new journey through education and achievements that he began afresh once he completed his previous journeys mentally and physically.

Partition railway novels rekindle the horrifying memories of the partition of the subcontinent, especially in the border areas due to religious hatred and communal violence, with its spatial and temporal implications of the past, the present and the future to come. From the narratives, I have tried to isolate and highlight the role of the trains with a timetable, and a temporality that plays a vital role in the close-knit fabric of spatial and temporal reproductions of a

195

society. Apparently, this society seems to be forging ahead according to a strict schedule during the times of peace, and staging massacres and devastations at times of strife. Technology takes part in the construction of a transformed symbol often seen as the 'secular modern space of mobility.' The narratives thus traverse back and forth in time from a future oriented, progressive temporal order, to a primitive savagery in the ghost trains; then to a feeble ray of hope, in the end, which suggests the 'present,' and the capability of time to avert a disaster and continue with its progressive journey once again. In the end in spite of the riots, death, murder and horrors, a train moved ahead to Pakistan with people alive, signifying continuity and hope as in *Train to Pakistan.*

Partition and Women in Trains

Partition novels project women as victims of inhuman atrocities committed by men from different or sometimes from the same religion as there were plenty of incidents of rape and murders due to hatred for the communities concerned. Patriarchal societies suppressed and victimised women as they were easy targets being considered the weaker sex. In *Train to Pakistan*, Hukum Chand recalls the tragic end of Sunday, the daughter of his orderly who was raped and murdered by the mob just four days after her marriage, and Sunder Singh who killed his wife and children in a train for lack of food and water. Sidhwa deals with the subject in Shanta's case as she was caught, converted and forced into prostitution, by the same man who earlier admired her and loved her ardently and many other women who had a similar fate. But Sidhwa also portrays strong women in such times of tribulations acting with courage in her novel.

Lenny is a strong female child-character who is an impartial and observant narrator of the story. Lenny's mother and her grandmother are strong characters who engage themselves in

humanitarian work during the communal riots, help the Hindus to escape to safety, rescue Ayah and other women and help to rehabilitate them. Being neither Hindu nor Muslim perhaps helped them to venture out among the furious mobs and emerge unharmed. When women were targeted by both sides in trains and in railway stations and bags of breasts were sent as cruel messages through trains, Showkat Hussain Dhar argues that '*Ice-Candy-Man* is a significant testament of a gynocentric view of reality in which the feminine psyche and experiences are presented with a unique freshness and aplomb' (2).

All the three novels have a positive note to end, with a railway system to continue surviving the partition violence and temporary suspension of insanity to hope for in the future. Dhar calls the *Train to India* a journey back towards light and time. He compares his forced train journey to India to a change of scene in a theatre. In spite of the hardships and losing everything in the turmoil, he sees a light in the end, a positive note of hope as he describes his train journey to India:

> A light has not been extinguished. The theatre changed, the lights and props changed——instead of the Meghna and Brahmaputra, I had reached the banks of the Ganga and Yamuna. (xiii)

He has compared the railway station with a stage, a stage in which a drama unravelled, scripted and enacted by people who are not familiar to the viewers. Though he has considered the station to be the stage, the journey according to him was nothing like a mere stage-drama but a real human drama:

> Our railway station was a stage, and trains and tracks unravelled the drama scripted by people who were not part of our life. However these train journeys to India were not mere village stage-dramas. These were a human drama; a part of a cruel Indo-drama which did not end with the great exodus. (4)

The great exodus was not even the end of the drama, because even at the end of the exodus life continued and people had to live. The village stage drama or any other work of fiction has an end though it is not a closure, but the drama which Dhar witnessed and acted in, at the

197

same time, had no end and no closure as he had been still a part of the exodus mentally for a long time even after reaching Calcutta until his father's death. Dhar's narrative is open ended; as he stops it once he finds light and peace, though his life continues.

According to Dhar a seemingly unending journey, a human drama of hatred had finally become a journey of love and faith in humanity though it took him almost half a century to realize the fact. And he declares that to be the real story of his journey aboard the *Train to India.*

Conclusion

In the year 1947, along with the tremors of partition Singh details the temporal order of Mano Majra that got derailed as the railway timetable turned unreliable and the daily activities of all the people in the village went haphazard. It was the children and their childhood that was the most affected as it can be derived from the life of Lenny (*Ice-Candy-Man)* and Dhar (*Train to India)*. Children seem to have lost the constancy and consistency associated with their childhood as they were thrown rudely into the adult world of communal hatred and violence to fend for their own lives. In the border villages it was as though a sudden maturity was forced upon them, taking their childhood away from them in an instant. Singh does not point out to any individual child, who suffers, but Lenny, and Krishna Dhar are examples of children who lost their childhood in the communal tension that surrounded them.

The railway, which is often cited as the cultural metaphor of India's progress in the journey towards modernity, got a setback with death trains and violence during the partition. But in spite of the trends showing reversal, trains have forged ahead both as engines of change and as the true life line of India. The narratives stop at some point of time and all the railway

novels discussed have an open ended and somewhat abrupt ending. But life continues with new stories and novel experiences as time flows on and as the trains move ahead as Singh's Jugga manages to avert a ghost train to Pakistan though at the cost of his life, Dhar beginning a life of light and love and Shanta, Lenny's ayah joining her people and starting a new life of hope.